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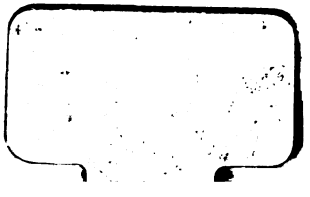

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MYDDLETON POMFRET.

MYDDLETON POMFRET.

A Novel.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1868.

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250. v. 134.

LONDON
PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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Wyddleton Pomfret.

PROLOGUE.

A SAD HONEYMOON.

I.

JULIAN CURZON.

SOME of my readers must recollect Julian Curzon.

A few years ago Julian was accounted one of the handsomest men about town, and was very popular, owing to his agreeable manners. His brilliant career in the world of fashion was cut short by an imprudent marriage. Beyond doubt he might have won a rich heiress or a wealthy widow, but he threw himself away on a penniless girl. The only excuse that can be offered for his folly is,

that he was madly in love, and certainly a more charming creature than Sophy Leycester, whom he married, cannot be imagined.

Sophy was the daughter of a Yorkshire gentleman of very moderate means, who could give her no portion. When Julian first beheld her, she was just nineteen, and a marvel of beauty. She had a ravishingly fair complexion, a graceful slender figure, a swan-like throat, features cast in the loveliest mould, large soft blue eyes, shaded by long silken lashes and overarched by pencilled brows, a forehead smooth and white as Parian marble, and a cloud of light fleecy locks. Despite her want of fortune, Sophy Leycester might have married well. She had many admirers, some of whom were rich. But she preferred Julian Curzon to any of them.

His daughter's choice was far from agreeable to Mr. Leycester. He had made sure of marrying

her to Lord Cranley or General Sir John Hawkesbury, both of whom were captivated by her charms, but finding her deaf to his representations he gave way, though not without considerable reluctance. No settlements were made on the marriage, for Julian had nothing to settle, and Mr. Leycester, in giving his consent to his daughter's marriage, gave nothing more.

In order that their bliss might be wholly undisturbed, the young couple determined to spend their honeymoon at the English lakes, and immediately after the performance of the ceremony proceeded by rail to Bowness. For a few weeks they seemed to be in Paradise. The weather was enchanting. Windermere displayed all its beauties—mirror-like expanse, lovely islands, woody promontories, mountain and fell. The happy pair passed almost all their time upon the lake, admiring the surrounding scenery, or moored in some sequestered bay,

where they seemed shut out from the rest of the world.

During all this time, Julian scarcely took up a newspaper. The world might go on as it pleased for aught he cared about it. He wrote no letters, and received none, and this is not surprising, since, in order to ensure perfect privacy, he had given out that he had gone with his bride upon the Continent.

Mrs. Curzon was almost as indifferent about news as her husband. She had brought a lady's-maid with her on the wedding trip, but Julian had dispensed with the attendance of his valet. Nevertheless, though they occupied private apartments in a wing of the hotel overlooking the garden, and secluded themselves as much as possible, their movements were curiously watched by the other guests, and whenever Julian went out with his lovely bride to embark in the little skiff which was kept

constantly in readiness for them, many an eye followed them, and many a glass tracked their passage across the lake.

One morning they were proceeding, as usual, to the place of embarkation, followed by a boatman carrying a hamper containing materials for an excellent luncheon. The beautiful Mrs. Curzon looked perfectly bewitching in her straw hat and batiste dress, and Julian showed to advantage in a cool Nankin summer costume and Panama hat. They were hastening towards the strand, not expecting interruption, when a person, who had been evidently on the look-out, stepped forward. He was a middle-aged man, in a short Oxford grey coat, and with nothing particular in his appearance, except that he had sharp features and keen grey eyes.

"Good morning, Mr. Curzon," he said, raising his hat as he approached. "I am surprised to

see you here. I fancied you were in Switzerland."

"I have changed my plans," replied Julian, who was perceptibly embarrassed. "I did think of going to Switzerland, but my wife is so charmed with this place that we have stayed here. My love, give me leave to present to you my old friend, Mr. Stonehouse," he added to Sophy.

The newly married lady rather superciliously acknowledged the obsequious bow addressed to her by the gentleman in the short Oxford grey coat.

"What brings you to this part of the world, may I ask, Stonehouse?" said Julian.

"Business. I had business at Kendal, and I thought I would come on here," replied the other. "I should like to have a word with you, if you will spare me a few minutes."

"Not now, Stonehouse," replied Julian. "You're not going away to-day, I'm sure. Dine with me

quietly at seven, and then we can have a chat over our wine."

"I didn't intend to stay so long," rejoined the other, "but I really have something important to say to you, so I accept the invitation."

"Delighted to hear it," returned Julian. "You'll have no difficulty in amusing yourself. Plenty to see here. We shall expect you at seven."

So saying, he moved off with his wife. Mr. Stonehouse looked after them for a few moments with a very peculiar expression of countenance, and then entered the hotel.

"Why did you ask that horrid man to dinner, Julian?" remarked Sophy, as they walked along.

"I couldn't help it, my dear," he replied. "He's an awful bore; but I must be civil to him, and so must you, darling. I didn't expect to see him here."

They then embarked in the boat, and were rowed

slowly towards one of the islands. Julian was so full of thought that he found it impossible to keep up a lively conversation.

"Apparently Mr. Stonehouse has cast a gloom over you," remarked his wife. "Who is he? I never heard you speak of him."

"He's a money-lender, my love, and really not a bad fellow. He has helped me out of many a scrape. I wish he hadn't come here though, for I fear I shall find it hard to get rid of him. After all, I wish we had gone to Switzerland, or to the Italian lakes."

"It's not too late to do so yet," she rejoined, "though I am certain we shan't find anything so charming as Windermere. Oh! how happy we have been here."

"I never knew what real happiness was till now. But we will go to Switzerland—that is, if I can shake off this troublesome fellow."

"Shake him off!" exclaimed Sophy, in surprise. "You can easily get rid of him, I suppose."

"Not so easily as you imagine, my love. There's only one way of getting rid of him—paying what I owe him."

"Well, pay him then."

"It would be rather inconvenient to me to do so now, my dear. But say no more on the subject. It bores me to talk about him."

Sophy, however, was not to be put off in this way. Presently she inquired:

"Do you owe Mr. Stonehouse much, Julian?"

"I forget the exact amount," he replied, evasively; "but it's more than I can manage just now."

"I was not aware you were in debt," she remarked.

"I haven't troubled you much with my private affairs, darling, and I don't care to discuss them

now. I've no doubt I shall be able to settle matters with Stonehouse. But to enable me to do so you must be civil to him. You'll find him tolerably agreeable when you know him better."

Sophy looked grave—graver than Julian had ever seen her look before. Finding all his efforts to enliven her futile, he became moody and silent in his turn. This was the first day since their union that had not passed off delightfully. They came back earlier than they intended, and Mrs. Curzon immediately retired to her own room.

At the hour appointed Mr. Stonehouse made his appearance. Sophy received him very coldly, but he did not seem put out by her manner. A very nice little dinner was served—including char from the lake. Exhilarated by the champagne, Mr. Stonehouse talked pleasantly and well, but Mrs. Curzon could not overcome her dislike to

him, and did not care to conceal it. Almost immediately after dinner she disappeared.

"Evidently your wife does not like me," remarked Mr. Stonehouse, helping himself to a glass of claret. "She is a very charming creature, I must own. But circumstanced as you are, you ought not to have married her. I always counselled you to marry a fortune."

"So you did, Stonehouse—so you did, but you see I have married to please myself."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll repent it. I can't help feeling sorry for the poor young lady."

"Spare your pity, Stonehouse," rejoined Julian, rather sharply. "You are the only person likely to cause her anxiety. If you don't trouble me she'll be all right."

"That's just it. I don't want to trouble you. It will distress me greatly to interfere with the last few days of your honeymoon, and I shall be grieved

beyond measure to cause your wife distress, but what am I to do?"

"Wait patiently, my good fellow, till it suits me to pay you," replied Julian, indifferently.

"I shall have to wait long enough if I wait till then," replied Stonehouse. "No, no, Mr. Curzon, I must speak out plainly. You've not behaved honourably. You've tried to swindle me."

"Swindle you! Come, come, Stonehouse, that's a little too strong."

"Swindle's the word, and no other. You've not met your engagements. I won't be trifled with any longer. If you don't settle with me, I'll clap you in Kendal jail. That's flat. Any appeal to my feelings in regard to your wife will be useless. You ought not to have placed the young lady in such a position. Why didn't you marry Miss Lake, or the other heiress, Miss Glenlyon? or, better still, the wealthy Mrs. Dundas? You might

then have set yourself straight. But you have been fool enough to throw away your last chance."

"Never mind what I've done, Stonehouse. It is nothing to you."

"It is everything to me, sir. By your folly you have deprived yourself of the sole power left you of paying me. And for what? You can't live with your charming wife now you've got her, for I suppose you won't take her to jail with you."

"Harsh language, Stonehouse—harsh language. But I know you don't mean to put your threats into execution."

"Don't I? You'll see. There's no use wasting time in idle talk. I'll leave you in peace to-night, but I shall come back in the morning, and, unless you are prepared to settle, I'll lock you up. I will, by Jupiter!"

Having delivered this menace, he was about to depart, when Mrs. Curzon entered the room.

"What has happened?" she exclaimed, startled by her husband's looks.

"I'll tell you, madam," replied Stonehouse. "It's proper you should know the truth."

"For Heaven's sake, if you are a man, spare her feelings!" implored Julian.

"Whatever it may be, let me hear it," said Sophy, closing the door.

"Well, then, the case is simply this," rejoined Stonehouse, totally disregarding the imploring looks thrown at him by Julian. "Your husband has given me a bond for a large sum of money. The bond has been dishonoured. For your sake, I assure you, I shall extremely regret if I am forced to adopt unpleasant measures."

"What is the amount of my husband's debt, sir?" asked Sophy, quietly. "I have some jewels and ornaments which cost more than two hundred pounds. You shall have them."

"Your husband owes me upwards of two thousand pounds, so that your offer of jewels to the amount of two hundred won't go very far towards paying me; but I thank you, nevertheless."

"You must not—shall not—give up your jewels, Sophy," said Julian. "Leave me to bear the consequences of my folly."

"Don't mind what he says, sir," she cried to the money-lender. "I don't care about my jewels. I'll fetch them for you at once, if you'll promise to be lenient to him."

"I can give no promise just now," rejoined Stonehouse, coldly. "Much will depend upon what he offers to-morrow."

"You see you can produce no effect upon the flinty-hearted rascal," said Julian.

"Give him time, sir; he will pay you—I am sure he will," implored Sophy.

"I have just said, madam, that I cannot be con-

tent with mere promises," rejoined Stonehouse. "Your husband has disappointed me so often that I can no longer trust him. I give him till to-morrow at noon for reflection. If he is then prepared to satisfy me, well and good. If not, he knows what will ensue. I wish you a good evening, madam."

So saying, he bowed to her and left the room.

For some minutes not a word was uttered. During this interval, Sophy continued to regard her husband, who remained at the table with his head buried in his hands. At last she broke the painful silence.

"And so it has come to this already! Our brief dream of happiness is over."

Julian looked up as she spoke, and gazed vacantly at her. The blow appeared to have partially stunned him.

"Have you any means of paying this man?" she continued. "Tell me frankly."

"None whatever," he replied. "I am hopelessly ruined."

She became very pale, but did not lose her composure. Fixing her fine eyes steadily and compassionately upon him, she said:

"I won't reproach you, Julian; but if you really loved me as devotedly as you professed, I cannot understand how you could conceal your difficulties from me."

"Love for you, Sophy, was the motive for concealment. Had I confessed the truth, I should have lost you. I therefore practised the deception."

"You have acted cruelly—very cruelly, Julian, and have placed me in a most painful position. Should Mr. Stonehouse put his threat into execution, and imprison you, what is to become of me?"

"Go back to your father. It will be your best plan."

"And you coolly recommend me to do this, Julian?" she rejoined, somewhat contemptuously. "You appear to care little for the humiliation and annoyance I must necessarily experience in taking such a step. But I am rightly served. I would not listen to papa's counsel. I would have my own way, because I believed you. I now know what your love is worth. I now thoroughly understand you. I pity you, but at the same time I despise you."

"Despise me! oh, recal that word, Sophy!"

"Julian, you must not expect that I can ever more love and respect you. Had unforeseen calamities overtaken you, I would have stood faithfully by your side, and have helped you to the best of my power. But you have acted dishonourably. You carefully concealed your embarrassed circum-

stances from me and from papa. Conduct like this cannot be pardoned. Henceforward it is impossible that we can live together. To-morrow I shall return home."

"I didn't mean what I said, darling. I won't consent to your return. You shall not leave me."

"You cannot help yourself. Mr. Stonehouse will prevent all interference on your part. Good night. I shall occupy Charlotte's room."

So saying, she went out, leaving him in a state bordering upon frenzy.

II.

A DESPERATE ACT.

TURN which way he would, there seemed no escape for the luckless Julian. He was in the clutches of an inexorable creditor. Pay him he must, either in purse or person. His lovely young wife, to whom he was passionately attached, had announced her determination to leave him, and he entertained no doubt that she would execute her threat. Dark thoughts swept through his brain, and he almost yielded to the promptings of despair.

Julian Curzon was by no means devoid of good qualities. Though reckless and extravagant, he was warm-hearted and generous. To such an extent had he practised self-deception as really to persuade himself that in marrying Sophy Leycester, a girl without money, he had acted a very disinterested part. Blind to the consequences of his imprudence, he succeeded for a time in stifling all self-reproach. But he was now rudely and unexpectedly awakened from his dream, and compelled to look his frightful position fully in the face.

Pacing to and fro within the room, he tried to reflect. But his brain was on fire, and he could not assemble his thoughts. At last he became more composed, and the changed expression of his countenance denoted that he had formed some resolution. Whatever his design might be, he set about it at once. Opening the door gently, he proceeded

with noiseless footsteps to his dressing-room. The apartments which he occupied, as we have already stated, were in a private part of the hotel, so he encountered no one on the stairs. After remaining in his dressing-room for nearly half an hour, he descended in the same quiet manner, with a small bundle in his hand, wrapped in a silk handkerchief. He had also changed his attire, and had put on a morning dress. Re-entering the room, he opened the window softly, and stepped out upon the lawn in front of the hotel, taking the little bundle with him.

Noiselessly as he did this, his movements were overheard by his wife, who was in a room above, the window of which commanded the garden and the lake. The night was cloudy, but there was light enough to enable her to distinguish her husband as he crossed the lawn. She saw him pass through the garden gate, and proceed towards a

wood skirting the lake. Then he was lost to view.

Long before this, Sophy's anger had subsided. She was filled with terrible misgivings. Had he left her? Had she driven him away by her reproaches? She had worked herself up to a fearful state of anxiety when Julian suddenly reappeared. He had now got rid of the bundle. On beholding him a fresh revulsion took place in her feelings, and she blamed herself for the weakness she had exhibited. Listening intently, she heard him enter the room and close the window softly, and then, believing her fears groundless, retired to rest—no, not to rest.

With Julian, however, the business of the night was not ended. On re-entering the room he sat down and wrote a long letter to his wife. The composition was extremely painful to him, and he several times abandoned his task. After many in

effectual efforts, he finished the letter, but on reading it over he was so dissatisfied, that he tore it up, and burnt the fragments.

At this juncture a sleepy-looking waiter entered the room to inquire whether Mr. Curzon had any further commands for the night, and being answered sternly in the negative, departed.

Julian then flung himself upon a sofa, and fell into a troubled sleep, which lasted till daybreak. The first beams of the sun shining in through the window aroused him, and he started up. All the painful thoughts which had been suspended during slumber rushed upon him at once with added poignancy.

Again he rushed up-stairs to his dressing-room. He was an admirable swimmer, and accustomed each morning to bathe in the lake. Snatching up the towels laid out for him, he went down-stairs, and once more threw open the window, but just

as he was about to issue forth his wife appeared. She had risen an hour ago from a sleepless couch.

"Stay a moment, Julian," she said. "I want to speak to you."

"Not now—not now," he rejoined. "I am about to cool my fevered brow in the lake. On my return I will talk to you."

"You will kill yourself, if you bathe now. I am sorry for what I said last night. I have come to tell you so."

He looked hard at her. His breast was torn by conflicting emotions.

"You were quite right in what you said," he cried. "My conduct has been infamous—unpardonable. I know I have forfeited your respect—perhaps your love."

"No, no, I love you still—I shall ever love you, Julian."

He looked as if he would have strained her to his heart, but he controlled the impulse.

"Sophy," he said, in broken accents, "you must forget me. I do not deserve your love. I am a worthless fellow, who ought never to have aspired to the hand of an angelic being like you. I see my folly too late, and can find no excuse for it —none! I fully comprehend the baseness of which I have been guilty. I would make reparation if I could. But since that is impossible, I won't be a further encumbrance to you."

"Your looks and words seem to point to something dreadful, Julian. I was wrong to reproach you so sharply. Don't let misfortune overwhelm you. Think not of the sombre present, but of a bright future. Whatever may be your lot I am prepared to share it with you."

"It must not, cannot be, Sophy. We must part this day for ever. You have nothing to re-

gret in the separation. I could not make you happy."

"Oh yes, you could, Julian," she cried, bursting into tears.

"I once thought so," he rejoined. "But I must not make another mistake."

"You will make a second mistake—worse, far worse than the first, if you act as I fear you intend, Julian. Do not yield to the promptings of despair. Struggle manfully against your difficulties, and you will overcome them."

"Had you spoken thus last night, Sophy, I might have listened to you, but all hope is now crushed within me. I can only see one way out of the frightful labyrinth in which I am involved, and that way I shall take. Forgive me the wrong I have done you. Think of me charitably, and may Heaven bless you!"

And he turned to depart.

"Stay, Julian, I conjure you. You must not—shall not go!" she cried.

But he dashed through the window, and hurried across the lawn in the direction of the lake. She called to him again and again, but he paid no heed, and never once looked back.

A fearful sickness of heart deprived her for a minute or two of strength, but as soon as she recovered she ran out. She saw him enter the boat, and again called out, but he heeded her not, and before she reached the strand he was rowing swiftly towards a woody and secluded bay about half a mile off.

In vain she renewed her cries—in vain she waved her handkerchief, hoping to attract his attention. He continued his course unmoved.

The morning was exquisite, and the glassy surface of the lake reflected the objects on its banks, and even the mountains around it. Nothing was

heard but the dip of oars as the boat speeded away, or the plash of some large fish as it rose. The lovely islands studding the lake seemed invested with magical beauty. But at that early hour no boat except Julian's could be descried on the water.

But what was the splendour of the morning, what was the beauty of the lake to Sophy? She was insensible to everything save her anguish. She had long ceased to call to her husband, for he was now too distant for her cries to reach him, even if he would have attended to them.

By this time he had gained the farther side of the bay, and approached so close to the shore that she fancied he was about to land. But no!—when within about thirty yards from the wood-fringed bank he ceased to row, and the boat became motionless.

For some minutes, during which she watched

him with intense anxiety, he did not appear to stir. Then hastily divesting himself of his apparel, he sprang over the side of the boat and dived into the lake. She looked anxiously for his reappearance on the surface of the water, but he did not rise again.

Several minutes elapsed—minutes of frightful agony!—and still she could see nothing of him.

But he might be hidden from her view by the boat. Ten minutes had now flown, and yet he had not reappeared. Her fears had almost become certainties. Still she clung to hope.

But time went on—five minutes more—and the placid surface of the lake was still undisturbed.

Yielding now to despair, she made the place echo with her shrieks. The attention of two men who had just put off in a boat from Bowness, being attracted by her outcries, they rowed towards her. As soon as they drew near, she made them

understand what had happened. At her solicitation they took her on board, and rowed swiftly towards the scene of the accident.

Ere long they neared the boat, which by this time had drifted further from shore. In it could be seen the unfortunate man's clothes. The boatmen scanned the smooth surface of the water, thinking he might have swum to a distance. But he could not be distinguished. They shouted loudly, but no answer was returned.

Poor Sophy, who looked as pale as death, perceived that they had lost all hope; but she scarcely dared to question them, and they did not proffer a remark, but muttered a few words to each other.

"You think I have lost him?" she gasped, at length, in accents that pierced their hearts. "You think he is drowned?"

"I daren't give you any hope, ma'am," replied

the elder boatman, in a tone of deep commiseration. "I'm awmost afeared your husband has been seized by cramp. The lake is very deep hereabouts, and the water icy cowld owing to the springs."

"Ay, there were a gen'l'man drownded in this very bay about six year ago—you mind it, Isaac?"

"Ay, ay. But don't talk about it now, Mat. Don't you see how you frighten the poor lady? Do let us take you to the hotel, ma'am. We'll then go and get the drags and search for the body."

"No, put me on board the other boat, and then lose no time in fetching the drags."

"Take my advice, ma'am," remonstrated Isaac. "Go ashore. You can do no good here."

But she refused to quit the spot, and the boatmen, finding her resolute, assisted her into the other boat, and then pulled vigorously towards Bowness, where they knew they could obtain drags.

Left to herself in the little bark lately occupied by her husband, the miserable lady gave vent to an outburst of grief, which she had restrained while the boatmen were present. Mingled with her heart-bursting sobs were self-reproaches of indescribable bitterness, for she felt assured that Julian had destroyed himself, and that she was the cause of the dreadful act. What would she have given to recal her words? Julian's difficulties now appeared as nothing. Willingly would she have shared his adverse fortune, if he could only have been restored to her. But he was gone—gone for ever! The deep blue waters of the lake hid him from her. And if she ever beheld him more, she shuddered to think it would be in death.

How ill did the lovely scene assort with her distress. The smiling lake seemed to mock her with its beauty. How often had she admired this

enchanting picture with Julian. How often had she listened to his rapturous admiration of the scene. All these recollections crowding upon her increased her anguish tenfold. But even the faintest sound—the cry of a bird—the plash of a fish—roused her, and she started up as if expecting to behold him. Alas! alas! she was ever disappointed.

After a frightfully long interval, as it seemed to her, shouts were heard, and a number of boats were seen approaching. Several of the boats were crowded — tidings of the disastrous occurrence having spread like wildfire through Bowness. Foremost amongst the throng of little barks were the boatmen with the drags. On arriving at the spot, the men at once commenced operations, and dragged the lake some fifty yards nearer the shore where they supposed the unfortunate man had sunk. The search was made with great care, and

long persevered in, but the body could not be found.

Owing to the presence of the unhappy lady, the scene was of the most painful kind. Looks of deep commiseration were directed towards her as she sat in the boat anxiously watching the operations. All wondered how she could sustain so severe a trial. Among the spectators was the iron-hearted Stonehouse, and even he was touched.

After continuing the search for several hours, the men desisted from their fruitless toil. Poor Sophy entreated them to go on, but they shook their heads, saying it was useless, and finding that nothing more could be done, she consented to go ashore. The boat in which she sat was then taken in tow, and as soon as it reached the landing-place, she was carefully and considerately lifted out, and carried in a state of half insensibility to the hotel, where every attention was shown her.

Later on in the day, the portion of the lake in which the ill-fated man had sunk was again dragged, and every expedient resorted to to recover the body, but without success.

Next day the efforts were renewed, but with a like unsatisfactory result. The lake never yielded up its prey, and the notion propounded by the boatmen was confirmed—namely, that the body had got lodged in a deep hole, from which it was impossible to extricate it. Subsequently, a skilful diver was employed in the search, but he made no discovery.

End of the Prologue.

BOOK I.

AN ILL-OMENED MARRIAGE.

I.

HOW JULIAN'S DEBTS WERE PAID, AND HOW SOPHY OBTAINED A THOUSAND A YEAR.

LONG did Sophy mourn her unfortunate husband. Though she never confided the dread secret to any one, she felt convinced that his death was not accidental; and she ceased not to reproach herself with being the cause of his untimely end.

She returned to her father's residence in Yorkshire, where she lived in complete retirement for nearly four years. At the end of that time an

event occurred which produced an important change in her circumstances.

One day a letter, bearing her address, arrived from Madras. Sophy had no correspondent in India, and the handwriting, which was bold and business-like, was perfectly strange to her. So she examined the letter carefully, wondering whom it came from. At last she opened it, and read as follows:

"Madras, May 10, 186—.

"MADAM,—You will be surprised to receive a letter from an entire stranger, with whose very name you are probably unacquainted. I must premise, therefore, by explaining who I am, as well as my motive for venturing to address you.

"I am a Madras merchant, junior partner of the house of Bracebridge, Clegg, and Pomfret, and I may as well state that I have been very suc-

cessful in business. Your late husband, Julian Curzon, was my intimate friend, and rendered me a most important service, which I have never forgotten, and which at length I trust I may be able partially to requite.

"It is no secret from me that poor Julian, at the time of his death, was greatly in debt, and I can easily conceive how much he must have suffered from inability to set himself straight. I do not think I can show greater respect for his memory than by acting as he would have desired to act. I mean to pay the whole of his debts, with interest up to the present time. With this design I have placed to your credit at Drummonds' the sum of six thousand pounds, which I beg you will apply in the liquidation of your husband's debts. If the sum should prove insufficient, I trust you will unhesitatingly apply to me for more.

"I feel sure it will be an agreeable task to you

to free your husband's name from reproach, and I therefore make no apology for requesting you to act for me in the matter. I will only beg you to kindly let me know that my wishes have been complied with.

"I remain, madam,

"Your obedient servant,

"MYDDLETON POMFRET."

This letter, which filled Sophy with the greatest astonishment, was quickly followed by another from Drummonds', informing her that six thousand pounds had been deposited with them in her name by Messrs. Bracebridge and Co., of Madras; thus removing any lingering doubts from her mind as to the genuineness of Mr. Pomfret's communication.

Sophy did not hesitate. Her desire to clear Julian's name from reproach was paramount to

every other consideration. It was not necessary to make any inquiries as to his debts, for she had a complete list of them, all his creditors having applied to her. None had been paid, and of course they had long since abandoned expectation of repayment. The total amounted to somewhat more than four thousand pounds. To this four years' interest had to be added, raising the amount to nearly another thousand pounds. Mrs. Curzon confided the arrangement of the affair to her father's man of business, Mr. Blair, of Throgmorton-street, and in less than a week every account was paid. When forwarding her the receipts, Mr. Blair informed her that nothing could exceed the gratitude of the creditors. Mr. Stonehouse declined the interest, but Mr. Blair forced it upon him.

All having been settled, Sophy wrote a letter overflowing with gratitude to Mr. Myddleton Pomfret, informing him that his instructions had

been fully carried out, and at the same time mentioning that he had sent her a larger sum than required. A thousand pounds belonging to him was left at Drummonds' to be returned, or applied as he might direct. In conclusion, she assured him she should never forget his kindness —never cease to pray for his welfare.

Nearly three months elapsed before Sophy again heard from her generous correspondent. She then received another letter, which we proceed to lay before the reader:

"MADAM,—I am at Ootacumand, on the Neilgherry hills, where I have come to recruit myself after a sharp attack of illness which brought me almost to death's door. Though much better, I am still not very strong. Nothing but inability to write would have prevented me from thanking you for your kind attention to my wishes. You

have given me inexpressible relief, for poor Julian's debts weighed upon me as heavily as if they had been my own. But I do not yet feel quite easy, and I trust you will accede to the request I am now about to make as readily as you did to my former proposition.

"The circumstances in which you have been placed by Julian's untimely death have caused me great distress. You ought to have an income sufficient to enable you to maintain your proper position. This income it is my wish to provide; and I trust you will not thwart my intentions.

"Julian's debts have turned out less than I expected. A thousand pounds, you tell me, is still left at Drummonds'. This sum, then, will constitute the first year's allowance, and I pledge myself that a like amount shall be regularly continued to you, and secured after my death.

"In confirmation of what I state, let me men-

tion that when seized with the dangerous illness to which I have adverted, I made my will, and bequeathed you a sum sufficient to provide you with an ample income. I consider myself justified in doing this, since I have no near relatives.

"My conduct may appear singular, and you will deem, perhaps, that I am influenced by overstrained feelings. It is not every man, I admit, who would act in this way. But I claim no merit, because I am simply performing what I hold to be a sacred duty.

"After this explanation, you will not, I am sure, oppose my wishes.

"Yours very sincerely,

"MYDDLETON POMFRET."

"What unheard-of generosity!" exclaimed Sophy, as she read this letter. "Would you believe it, Celia?" she added to her sister, who was

with her at the time. "This kind-hearted Mr. Myddleton Pomfret means to allow me a thousand a year. He has fully explained his motives for his extraordinarily liberal conduct, and I can perfectly understand and appreciate them."

"Well, you are lucky, indeed!" cried Celia. "I congratulate you upon your good fortune. Why, Mr. Pomfret must be a prince."

"No, he is only a Madras merchant," replied Sophy; "but he certainly has a princely disposition. Really the circumstances are so extraordinary that I can scarcely credit them. Through the instrumentality of this noble-hearted man, whom I have never seen, I have been enabled to pay off poor Julian's debts, and now he provides me with a large income. But I don't think I ought to accept it."

"Is the offer clogged by any disagreeable conditions?" inquired Celia.

"On the contrary, it is made in the handsomest manner possible. Mr. Pomfret considers himself under deep obligations to my poor dear husband, which can only be discharged by the course he proposes to pursue."

"Since it is put in that way, I do not see why you should decline the offer," observed Celia. "I wonder what Mr. Pomfret is like? He can't be very old, since he was Julian's friend."

"I know nothing whatever about him, beyond what his letters communicate," said Sophy; "but Mr. Blair informed me that the house to which he belongs is one of the first in Madras."

"Is he a bachelor?"

"How can I possibly tell, you silly creature? I fancy he is unmarried, because he expressly states in his letter that he has no near relations."

"Indeed! what a nice man he must be—very rich, since he can afford to give away a thousand a

year to a friend's widow—and no relations. Perhaps he will follow up his present proposition by an offer of his hand."

"Don't tease in this way, I beg of you, Celia," said Mrs. Curzon, the tears starting in her eyes. "I shall never—never be faithless to my dear Julian's memory. You shake my design of accepting Mr. Pomfret's offer. I would never lay myself under such great obligations to him if I thought he would presume upon his liberality."

"Nay, I was but joking," said Celia. "Don't be such a goose as to refuse this wonderful offer. I hope your magnificent friend will soon come back from Madras. Be sure to tell him how charmed we shall all be to see him, and put in a word for me if you can manage it," she added, laughing.

"I shall not come to a hasty decision in the

matter," said Sophy. "The proposal is so singular that it requires consideration."

"I don't think it requires a moment's consideration," cried Celia. "What! you who haven't got fifty pounds a year—who have scarcely enough for your milliner's bill—who are completely dependent upon papa—you refuse a thousand a year—a fortune! Think what such a sum implies. A thousand a year will give you a nice little establishment in town, in a fashionable quarter. A thousand a year will give you a pretty little brougham or a pretty phaeton, servants, charming dresses, every luxury. A thousand a year will enable you to live well, dress well, and keep up society. A thousand a year will do wonders. You'll soon be thought a charming young widow, for you are still young, Sophy, and haven't lost your good looks. Oh, I wish I had a thousand a year! Shouldn't I be happy? Shouldn't I know how to spend it?"

And she clapped her hands and laughed joyously.

"I shall lead a very quiet life," remarked Sophy.

"No you won't," cried Celia. "You've lived in retirement quite long enough. You'll live in town, I say, and let me live with you."

Mrs. Curzon shook her head.

"I have not spirits enough for society," she said.

"Then I'll find spirits for you," cried the gay Celia. "Live in town you must, and shall. Write by the first Indian mail to Mr. Myddleton Pomfret, and accept his proposition."

"Only if papa approves," said Sophy.

Papa, on being consulted, *did* approve, and thus enunciated his opinion.

"This is an extraordinary circumstance," he said, "and quite passes my comprehension. Such an instance of friendship is of very rare occurrence in these degenerate times, and proves Mr. Pomfret to be no common man. The delicacy and

good feeling manifested by him in making the offer to you will enable you to accept it; and I must sincerely congratulate you upon your good fortune in finding such a friend. You ought to look upon the income you will receive as a legacy from poor Julian. In reality you owe it to him."

"I shall look upon it in that light, dear papa," she replied. "You have removed all the scruples I felt in accepting the offer."

"You need have no scruples, my dear," he returned. "You richly deserve your good fortune, and I again congratulate you upon it."

Satisfied that she could, with propriety, accept his offer, Sophy thus wrote to her benefactor:

"My dear Mr. Myddleton Pomfret,—I accept your noble offer, and fully appreciate the motives that have induced you to make it. But really the large income you are generous enough

to allow me is more than adequate to my wants. Ever since the irreparable loss I have sustained, I have lived a life of perfect seclusion, and scarcely desire to emerge from it. Hence society can have few attractions for me, and were it not for my sister, I should prefer remaining as I am. Celia, however, is eager to mix with the world, and ever since she has heard of your generous intentions towards me, has not ceased to urge me to live in town. Perhaps I may yield to her entreaties, but as yet I am undecided. I should like to have your opinion. Pray give it me frankly, and be sure I will be guided by it.

"I feel utterly incapable of thanking you as I ought for your great generosity, and if I fail in doing so, you will not impute it, I am sure, to want of gratitude.

"That you should have thought of me during the dangerous illness with which I grieve to hear

you have been afflicted, affords another proof of the depth of your friendship for Julian. Need I say how deeply I am touched by the manifestation? Only the noblest natures are capable of such exalted feelings. To ordinary minds your conduct would be unintelligible, but believe me *I* comprehend it. Long before this reaches you, I trust you will have entirely recovered.

"Again thanking you from my heart,

"I remain,

"Your ever grateful,

"SOPHIA CURZON."

Before changing her abode, though strongly urged to do so both by her father and sister, Sophy awaited Mr. Pomfret's reply. After the lapse of a couple of months the ensuing letter came:

"MY DEAR MRS. CURZON,—As you are good

enough to express some anxiety about my health, I will relieve you at once by stating that I am now much better. All I suffer from is debility, but that I owe to the climate. Were it possible, I would return to my native country without delay; but I must, perforce, remain here for a couple of years longer, when, if I am spared, I shall leave India altogether, and then I trust I shall have the pleasure of making your personal acquaintance. By that time you will have come, I hope, to consider me in the light of an old friend.

"I am rejoiced to find that you have allowed no scruples to interfere with the acceptance of my offer. You would have hurt me greatly if you had. Never consider yourself under any obligation to me, but regard the gift as coming from Julian. The estimation in which you hold his memory gratifies me inexpressibly.

"You flatter me very much by asking my ad-

vice as to your future plans. I should not have presumed to say a word on the subject; but since you request my opinion, I declare at once that I agree with your sister. Society, I hope, will not be much longer deprived of one of its brightest ornaments. Take a suitable house in town, and live as your tastes and inclinations dictate. Julian, I am sure, would not have wished you to seclude yourself.

"I have heard your sister Celia, who, I believe, is unmarried, described as lively and light-hearted, and I shall be glad to hear she is living with you. You could not have a more agreeable companion.

"One word more. Though I have limited your allowance to a thousand a year, if your expenses should, at any time, from unforeseen circumstances, exceed that amount, do not hesitate to apply to me.

"Naturally I shall feel a lively interest in your proceedings, and I trust I am not asking you

too much in begging you to write to me frequently.

"Write confidentially and without reserve. Make me the depository of your secrets, if you have any to communicate. Ask my advice on any subject, and I will give it you sincerely.

"In your next letter I hope to hear that you have taken a nice little house somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park. Pray make my compliments to Mr. Leycester and your sister,

"And believe me, dear madam,

"Sincerely yours,

"MYDDLETON POMFRET."

Mrs. Curzon communicated the contents of this letter to her father and sister, both of whom agreed that the writer must be the most amiable of men. Celia was enchanted with the allusion to herself, and declared it was quite wonderful how thoroughly Mr. Pomfret understood her character.

"Julian must have described me to him," she said. "Oh, how I wish he would come back from India! What a pity he is obliged to remain there for two years longer, and he seems to suffer so much from the climate."

In less than a month afterwards Mrs. Curzon was able to inform her generous correspondent that she was installed with her sister at a charming little house in Hertford-street, May Fair. She only wished Mr. Pomfret could see how elegantly it was furnished. Nothing was wanting. Her little establishment was complete, and she had a well-appointed brougham. In pursuance of his recommendation, though contrary to her own inclinations, she had made up her mind to enter into society once more, and had, consequently, called upon several old friends. Invitations were showering upon her on all sides.

II.

CAPTAIN MUSGRAVE.

ONE morning in June two tall and handsome young men, both of very distinguished appearance, were walking slowly along Pall Mall in the direction of Saint James's-street, engaged in earnest converse. One of them was Captain St. Quintin, of the Grenadiers; the other Captain Scrope Musgrave, of the Bengal Rifles, lately returned from India. Very handsome they both were, as we have just intimated, though in different styles. St. Quintin had a slight, elegant figure, features of

almost feminine delicacy, relieved by a pale moustache, and loosely flowing whiskers of the same hue. His companion, on the contrary, who though equally well proportioned, possessed a more muscular frame, was so exceedingly swarthy, that he was nicknamed by his intimates "Black Musgrave." Skin, beard, hair, eyes were dark as those of a Hindoo. Captain Musgrave's physiognomy was very marked and striking—more striking, perhaps, than pleasing. His features were regular, his eyes large and brilliant, and his dazzling white teeth contrasted with a jetty beard. His expression, however, was haughty and disdainful, and marred the effect which must have been otherwise produced by his good looks. He was a few years older than his companion, but still under thirty. The two young men were going to make a call at the house of a lady in May Fair, and were talking about her as they sauntered along.

"And so you are struck by the lovely widow, Scrope?" remarked St. Quintin.

"Struck all of a heap," replied Musgrave. "She's a charming creature—precisely the sort of a woman I have been looking for all my life, but have never seen till last night, when I met this enchantress at Lady Northbroke's. I lost my heart to her the very moment I beheld her, and yet, as you well know, St. Quintin, I'm not exactly the man to fall in love at first sight."

"I should never have suspected you of the weakness if you hadn't owned to it," remarked the other, laughing.

"To my mind, I have never seen so charming a face as Mrs. Curzon's," continued Musgrave. "I studied it for more than an hour, as if contemplating a beautiful picture, and the longer I looked the more enamoured I became. I was just considering how I could manage to get pre-

sented to her, when you kindly performed the office for me."

"Only too happy to oblige a friend," returned St. Quintin. "And let me tell you that no one could have served you better than myself. I paved the way for your introduction by saying the right thing to Mrs. Curzon, for she is monstrously particular, and won't know everybody. I think you must have contrived to please her, for she appeared more than usually gracious to you. In a general way, she is exceedingly cold and reserved."

"I certainly did not find her cold," said Musgrave, displaying his white teeth. "On the contrary, she appeared to me remarkably amiable, in proof of which she did not object when I ventured to ask permission to call upon her this morning. And now, my good fellow, tell me something more about her. How long has she been a widow? And how about her jointure? I hope she is well endowed. She deserves to be."

"You mustn't raise your expectations too high in regard to her jointure," returned St. Quintin. "Put it down at a thousand or twelve hundred a year, and you won't be far wide of the mark."

"Twelve hundred a year is not so bad. It will do very well with such a charming person," said Musgrave. "I would rather have her with twelve hundred than another with twelve thousand."

"But I'm not quite clear that it won't go away in the event of her marriage," rejoined St. Quintin. "So you must look well before you leap. In reply to your first inquiry, I may tell you that she has been a widow nearly four years. Her matrimonial fetters did not hold her long, and were severed before the honeymoon was over."

"The deuce! What happened to her husband?" cried Musgrave.

"Drowned one fine morning while bathing in Windermere," replied St. Quintin.

"Ah, I now recollect the circumstance. It occurred just before I went to India. So she was the wife of Julian Curzon. There was something strange about his death, if I'm not mistaken."

"Some people fancied he made away with himself because he was desperately in debt at the time," replied St. Quintin; "but there was nothing to justify the supposition, I believe. The strangest part of the story is that the body was never found, though every search was made for it."

"That's strange indeed," said Musgrave, reflectively. "If Curzon died in debt, how happens it that his widow has so good a jointure?"

"She doesn't derive her income from him," returned St. Quintin. "Julian made no settlement upon her, for the best of all reasons, that he had nothing to settle. For a long time after his death she had nothing, and was obliged to live in absolute retirement. Then a turn came for the

better. A Madras merchant, Mr. Myddleton Pomfret, who had been under considerable obligations to Julian—though what they were I can't say—took upon himself to pay the poor fellow's debts, and insisted upon making a handsome allowance to the widow."

"Oh, that's how she gets her income, is it?" cried Musgrave. "I know Myddleton Pomfret. He's a partner in Bracebridge's house at Madras Is he Julian's relative?"

"No, he seems merely actuated by friendship."

"Hum!" exclaimed Musgrave. "If this is really the case, and I suppose there's no mistake——"

"No mistake whatever. I had it all from Mrs. Curzon's sister, Celia."

"In that case," pursued Musgrave, "it is quite clear that the fair widow's income will cease if she marries again. Rather a bad look out, eh?"

"Draw your own conclusions, Musgrave. I can't help you further."

This conversation brought them to the pretty little house in Hertford-street, in which Mrs. Curzon was established with her sister. They found Celia alone in the charmingly furnished drawing-room. Exquisite flowers were in the balcony, and their odour came through the open windows, which were screened by flowing white curtains.

Celia received the visitors with smiles, and at once entered into a lively conversation with them. She was two years younger than Mrs. Curzon, and there was a strong family likeness between them, though Celia was a beauty on a small scale. She had the smallest feet, the smallest hands, the largest eyes, and the daintiest little figure imaginable. Her rich auburn tresses, taken back from her polished brow, were gathered in a magnificent

chignon. An arch expression of countenance, a lively and somewhat coquettish manner, added to her attractions. Whenever she laughed—and she was constantly laughing—she displayed two splendid ranges of pearls. On the present occasion she was attired in vapoury tarlatane, which made her look like a fay.

Presently Mrs. Curzon entered, and both gentlemen rose to salute her. If Scrope Musgrave had been captivated by her beauty overnight, he thought her ten times more lovely now. A light silk dress of the latest Paris mode displayed her graceful figure to admiration. Since her first introduction to the reader, Sophy was somewhat changed, and, if possible, improved. She was now four-and-twenty, and in the full perfection of her beauty. Her figure was a little fuller than before. A slight shade of melancholy heightened the interest of her features, and gave additional sweetness to her smile.

On entering, she apologised for not making her appearance sooner.

"I have been writing to India," she said, "and could not delay my letter, as the mail goes out to-day."

"You have not been in India, I suppose, Mrs. Curzon?" inquired Musgrave.

"No; and I have not the slightest wish to go there. I don't think the climate would suit me."

"The heat is formidable, I own; but then we have many contrivances to render it supportable. Generally, ladies like India. They are made much of, and contrive to pass their time very agreeably. In all the chief towns there is delightful society. Having been in most parts of India, I can speak positively on the point."

"If you have been in Madras, you may possibly be acquainted with the gentleman to whom I have just been writing—Mr. Myddleton Pomfret?" remarked Mrs. Curzon.

"Oh yes, I know him. A merchant. He has a first-rate cook, and gives capital dinners."

"What sort of person is he?" inquired Celia quickly. "Do tell me, please, Captain Musgrave. Describe him as accurately as you can."

"I'll do my best to paint his portrait," replied Musgrave, laughing, "but I've no particular talent in that line. There really is nothing very remarkable in his appearance. In age, as well as I can guess, he must be nearly fifty."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Celia, with a look of disappointment. "Is he so old? I fancied he was under thirty. I hope he is good-looking."

"I should not call him so," replied Musgrave. "He's short and stout, with a brick-dust complexion, light grey eyes, a snub nose, and——"

"Stop! stop! Captain Musgrave. I'm sure you are caricaturing him," cried Sophy. "It is impossible Mr. Pomfret can be such a fright."

"If you wish me to flatter, I'll do it, but if I

am to speak truth, I must describe him as—what he is—a common-place, good-humoured, jolly fellow."

"Not in the least sentimental?" cried Celia.

"Not a grain of sentiment in his composition. He is a very good man of business, as I understand, and knows how to turn over the rupees."

"I find it extremely difficult to reconcile your description of my unseen friend with his letters," observed Mrs. Curzon. "They appear to emanate from a person of great refinement and sensibility. I pictured to myself a younger man than you describe — not handsome, perhaps, but with a thoughtful, intelligent countenance, and a frame somewhat worn and wasted from the effect of the climate. I know he has been suffering from illness lately."

"A touch of liver, no doubt," replied Musgrave, showing his fine teeth. "Not surprising from his mode of living. I'm sorry to dispel an illusion,

Mrs. Curzon, and substitute reality for fancied ideal. Myddleton Pomfret is not a bad specimen of an English merchant, and is popular enough at Madras on account of his dinners. I never drank better claret than at his bungalow, and he don't stint it."

During this description the sisters had exchanged looks of disappointment, and Sophy exclaimed:

"Whatever Mr. Pomfret may be personally, he has an excellent heart. Of that I have had ample proof. He is a true friend, and generous in the highest degree."

"He can easily be generous, for he has lots of money, and nothing to do with it," replied Musgrave.

"You are reluctant, I perceive, to allow him any merit," said Mrs. Curzon, "and I shall believe just as much as I please of your description of my excellent friend."

"I hope I haven't incurred your displeasure,

Mrs. Curzon, for my frankness," said Musgrave; "but as you will probably see Mr. Pomfret one of these days, you will then be able to judge of the accuracy of my description."

Shortly afterwards, an interruption was offered by the entrance of some ladies, and the two gentlemen rose to depart. When they got out of the house, Captain St. Quintin remarked to the other, with a laugh:

"I suspect you have been mystifying the fair widow with this description of her friend. Come! tell me candidly. Is it not so?"

"Don't ask me," rejoined Musgrave, with a singular smile.

III.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

FROM that day forward Captain Musgrave was unremitting in his attendance on the fair widow, and contrived to make himself so agreeable to her and to Celia that they could scarcely dispense with his society. He provided them with stalls at the theatres, and boxes at the Opera Houses, gave frequent pleasant little dinners at Richmond and Greenwich, and escorted them to Ascot. Though he never breathed a word of love, he was so devoted in his manner to Sophy that no doubt could

be entertained of the nature of his sentiments. But so cautiously did he act, and so imperceptible was the progress he made in her regard, that she was quite unaware that she took any real interest in him, until one or two trifling circumstances revealed it to her. When she made the discovery it was almost too late to retreat, but she persuaded herself that she could shake him off, if necessary.

Sophy did not allude to Musgrave in the first letter she wrote to Myddleton Pomfret after making the captain's acquaintance, because she had an instinctive feeling that allusion to him would not be agreeable to her correspondent; but when the acquaintance had ripened into intimacy, she thought it only proper to refer to her new friend.

"I have lately seen a good deal of Captain Scrope Musgrave," she wrote. "He tells me he knows you, having partaken of your hospitality at Madras. Both Celia and I like him much. He speaks very highly of you, as he could not fail to do."

Fully two months elapsed before an answer to this letter arrived, and before that time the handsome and captivating Scrope Musgrave had declared his passion for the fair widow, and was accepted. Yes, we grieve to say, he *was* accepted. She, who had proclaimed herself inconsolable, who had almost vowed she would remain faithful to the memory of her dear Julian, had engaged herself to another. It was not certainly without much persistence that assent was wrung from her, and she reproached herself for giving it, but Captain Musgrave prevailed. By the next mail she announced her engagement to Myddleton Pomfret, and trusted he would approve of the step she had taken.

"I dare say the intelligence will surprise you," she wrote, "after my professions of unalterable attachment to Julian's memory, but you see what inconsistent creatures women are."

Captain Musgrave was strongly averse to this

letter being sent. It would be time enough, he said, to announce the marriage after it had taken place. But Sophy would not be dissuaded. Her letter was crossed by another from Madras. It was shorter than any communication she had as yet received from Myddleton Pomfret, and quite startled her.

"Your letter has caused me the greatest uneasiness. Captain Musgrave is a person whom I hold in the utmost abhorrence. I will not characterise him as strongly as he deserves, but he is dangerous, and I cannot help dreading that he has a base object in view in obtaining an introduction to you. So anxious do I feel on this score, that, were it possible, I would come over to England. This I cannot do, but I entreat you at once to break off the acquaintance."

Captain Musgrave was with her when she received this letter. He saw by her emotion how

profoundly she was affected, and took the letter from her trembling hand. She watched his countenance as he perused it. He muttered a deep execration, and his eyes flashed fire as he looked up.

"I wish the fellow would come to England," he cried. "He should answer to me with his life for his vile imputations. But I must not allow his slander to produce any effect upon you, sweet Sophy. From motives, for which I am sure you will give me credit, I have forborne to speak of him as he deserves, but I must now tell you that he and I were mixed up together in an unfortunate affair in Madras, in which a lady's reputation was implicated—implicated by him, not by me—and I had to chastise him for his conduct towards her. I have often intended to mention this circumstance to you, but have been deterred by fear of giving you pain. You will now comprehend the fellow's

object in writing this calumnious letter. Fearing I should unmask him, he seeks to discredit my assertions. I am sorry you have ever had anything to do with such a scoundrel."

"If he is such a person as you represent him, Scrope, the sums which he has advanced me must be repaid. I ought not to be under any obligation to him."

"Don't give yourself any trouble about him. He deserves to lose the money. You knew nothing about him when you accepted his bounty, and should have known nothing had he not rendered exposure necessary."

"Had I been aware of his character, I would not have accepted the slightest favour from him. I am placed in a very painful position, and scarcely know how to act."

"Leave me to deal with him. If I deem it necessary, the money shall be returned. In your

last, you told him of our engagement. Did you mention when the marriage was likely to take place?"

"I told him it would take place speedily—probably before the end of the month—as you were very anxious there should be no delay. That was exactly what I stated."

"I wish you had said nothing about it. But it doesn't signify. Since he is in India, he can give us no trouble. And now dismiss all thoughts of him from your mind."

Sophy strove to obey the injunction, but found it quite impossible. She could not help thinking a great deal about her singular correspondent; neither could she reconcile Musgrave's statements respecting him with her own preconceived notions, or even with Pomfret's conduct.

Celia, to whom she confided all her doubts and fears, was almost as much infatuated as herself by

Musgrave, and did not attach any importance to Myddleton Pomfret's warning. He could only have been actuated by jealousy to write such a letter, she declared. It was quite certain he didn't want Sophy to marry at all, but meant to offer her his own hand on his return to his native country.

Captain Musgrave could not have found a better advocate, had he needed one, than Celia proved. She successfully combated any objections raised by her sister, and quieted her qualms of conscience.

When consulted, Mr. Leycester, though he was not altogether satisfied, offered no opposition to the match. He would have been better pleased if his daughter had united herself to a wealthier man, and of higher position; but as he himself was not required to do anything, he raised no objection. "Sophy was her own mistress, and could do as she pleased. Captain Musgrave was a

very handsome fellow, and if she liked him she was quite right to marry him. For his own part, he should have preferred a plainer man, with more money; and if graced with a title, so much the better. However, Sophy was the person chiefly interested, and must please herself. He only hoped her second marriage would turn out more prosperously than the first."

This was all he said. The allusion to her first marriage brought tears to Sophy's eyes; but Celia, who was present at the time, soon chased them away.

IV.

THE MARRIAGE.

CAPTAIN MUSGRAVE'S impatience increased for the speedy celebration of his marriage with the lovely widow. Sophy would have preferred a little longer delay, but suffered herself to be overruled, and the day was at last fixed, and at no distant date. The interval, which was about three weeks —Musgrave would have abridged even this if he could—was spent in preparations for the happy event.

Throughout this period Sophy's irresolution con-

tinued. Her spirits drooped. One morning she informed Celia that she had dreamed of Julian, and that he had regarded her with a sad and reproachful countenance. But Celia only laughed at the relation.

As the day approached which was to link her fortunes for ever with those of Captain Musgrave, instead of becoming more cheerful Sophy became more melancholy. If she had possessed sufficient moral courage she would have broken off the engagement even then, but she had not firmness enough for the effort. Again she mentioned her misgivings to her sister, and again was laughed at for her wavering. No word, therefore, was uttered by her.

Captain Musgrave had not failed to remark her melancholy looks, and attributed them to the right cause; but he feigned not to notice them, and allowed her no opportunity of explanation

Strange to say, when the expected day arrived, Sophy recovered her cheerfulness. She had passed an excellent night, and arose in good spirits. The day was splendid, and all looked bright and smiling.

An incident, however, occurred which at once threw a cloud over her liveliness, and re-awakened all her misgivings. She had just entered her boudoir, arrayed in the exquisite bridal-dress which had been prepared for her by one of the first modistes. Celia, who of course was one of the bridesmaids, had likewise just completed her toilette, and the two sisters were admiring each other's dresses, when the lady's-maid brought in a letter for her mistress. Sophy changed colour as she caught sight of it, and exclaimed:

"Why, it's from Myddleton Pomfret!"

"Never mind. Don't read it now," cried Celia.

But Sophy hurriedly opened the letter, and on perusing it became deathly pale, and appeared ready to sink.

"I'm sorry you would read it," said Celia, picking up the letter, which Sophy had dropped in her agitation. "Let us see what the troublesome creature has to say for himself."

The letter was dated Marseilles, and ran as follows:

"This letter will serve as an avant-courrière, to announce my arrival this morning at Marseilles. Within a few hours I hope to see you. I shall start for Paris by the night express, and proceed thence, without stoppage, to London.

"The intelligence conveyed in your last letter of your engagement to Captain Musgrave, caused me such intense anxiety that I embarked by the first packet. Heaven grant I may be in time to save

you from the peril by which you are threatened! Ceaseless misery would be your portion if you were to wed this man. I have cautioned you against him; but even if he were high-principled, and worthy of your love, as he is base and dishonourable, the marriage must not, cannot be. Unsurmountable obstacles to it exist. These you will learn when we meet, and you will then comprehend the frightful risk you have incurred. I need not be more explicit, since I shall see you so soon.

"I have a strange and startling disclosure to make, and my principal object in writing is to prepare you for the surprise, and perhaps shock, which the disclosure is likely to occasion.

"All my plans have been disconcerted by this unexpected and disastrous occurrence. I have hurried away from Madras at the greatest personal inconvenience. But my presence in London seems

absolutely necessary, and may be the only means of averting irreparable mischief.

"Again I implore you to prepare yourself for our meeting. When you know all, you may blame me; but I am persuaded you will pardon the deception I have practised.

"MYDDLETON POMFRET."

"What can he mean? What terrible disclosure can he have to make?" gasped Sophy.

"I'm sure I can't tell," replied Celia, who was much alarmed by the letter. "If he has any revelations to make, why not speak out at once. I'm afraid there's something wrong, as well as mysterious, about him. I firmly believe he only wants to break off your marriage with Scrope in order to secure you for himself. But he'll be disappointed in that anticipation."

"The marriage must be delayed, Celia. I'm too

much upset to go through the ceremony. Besides, I cannot neglect the warning given me. I am bound to hear Mr. Pomfret's disclosure before I take an irrevocable step, against which he so solemnly warns me. Where is Scrope?"

"In the drawing-room, I suppose."

"Come with me to him."

They found Captain Musgrave in the drawing-room, capitally got up for the occasion, and looking superbly handsome.

"What is the matter?" he inquired, startled by Sophy's appearance. "You have just received a letter, I am told. Has it put you out?"

"Read it," she replied.

Musgrave read the letter deliberately, and his countenance darkened. When he had finished, he laughed bitterly.

"Didn't I tell you he was an infernal hypocrite?" he cried. "He confesses he has deceived

you, but dares not tell you for what purpose. I could tell you, but I won't. His effrontery, however, exceeds any notion I had formed of it. I never supposed he would come to England on such a fool's errand. However, he will take nothing by the move," he added, again laughing bitterly. "He'll be rather too late to hinder the marriage, even if he had the power."

"The ceremony must be postponed," said Sophy. "I cannot go through with it until after I have seen him."

"Postponed!" exclaimed Musgrave. "You cannot seriously mean what you say, Sophy."

"I could not approach the altar with such a weight on my breast. I am bound to hear what Mr. Pomfret has to say, Scrope. His warning is so earnest, so impressive, that I cannot refuse to listen to it. He will be here in a few hours."

"I will consent to no delay on his account or on

any other," rejoined Musgrave, angrily. "If the marriage does not take place to-day, it cannot take place at all. But wait for him, if you please. I shall be here to confront him on his arrival, and you may rely upon it," he added, fiercely, "that he will repent his audacity."

"Do consider what you are about, Sophy dear," interposed Celia, in a low persuasive tone. "If the marriage is postponed, it will infallibly cause a vast deal of unpleasant comment; and Scrope is evidently so irritated—and, as I think, so justly irritated—that if a meeting takes place between him and this provoking Mr. Pomfret, I tremble to think of the consequences."

"Have you decided, Sophy?" said Musgrave, in an authoritative tone. "Will you be ruled by this fellow or by me?"

"By you, Scrope," she rejoined, gently. "Come good, come ill, I am yours for ever."

"You are an angel," he cried, embracing her tenderly.

"How delighted I am that all is satisfactorily settled!" cried Celia. "Give me that horrid letter. I'll burn it as soon as possible."

"It's lucky for Pomfret that he didn't come a day sooner," observed Musgrave, "or he would have met with a reception that he didn't expect. As it is, we shall be on our way to Paris before he turns up."

"If you should happen to meet him, Scrope, there must be no quarrel between you. Promise me this," said Sophy, earnestly. "And now," she added, on receiving the required assurance from him, "you must leave me. I must be alone for a short time in order to recover myself."

Despite the warning she had received—despite her own misgivings—Sophy was united that morning at St. George's, Hanover-square, to Captain

Musgrave. She could scarcely support herself through the ceremony, and her agitation was so visible that it attracted the attention even of the clerical dignitary who officiated on the occasion. But her emotion was attributed solely to nervousness. A slight noise occurred when the awful charge was delivered, requiring the pair to confess if either of them knew of any impediment to their union, and the bride glanced round in terror, almost expecting Myddleton Pomfret to appear. But he came not. Captain Musgrave stood proudly beside her at the altar, and had quite an elated look when the ceremony was concluded.

After the nuptials there was, of course, a sumptuous breakfast; but the newly married couple did not remain long at the repast, it being their intention to proceed to Folkstone, and cross on the same evening to Boulogne. From Boulogne they proposed to proceed to Paris, and thence to the

south of France. This plan, arranged by Scrope, was not altogether agreeable to Sophy, who preferred a tour in England, but she acquiesced in it.

Quitting the wedding breakfast early, as we have stated, the bride and bridegroom, accompanied by Celia and a lady's-maid, crossed that evening to France. About midway in the Channel they met another steamer coming from Boulogne, and watched her as she passed by.

"I wonder whether Myddleton Pomfret is on board that boat?" remarked Musgrave to his bride.

She turned pale at the observation, but made no reply.

There was more truth in Musgrave's remark than he thought. The person alluded to *was* among the passengers in the steam-boat.

Next morning, a hansom cab drove up to the house in Hertford-street, and a tall, well-dressed man alighted from it. Though he could not be

much more than five-and-thirty, this gentleman's profuse beard was tinged with grey, as were his locks. When he inquired for Mrs. Curzon, the footman who answered the door smiled. The gentleman could not be aware, he said, that she was only married yesterday to Captain Musgrave.

"They are gone to Paris to spend the honeymoon," continued the man, who did not notice the effect produced by his communication upon the stranger.

The gentleman walked away without a word, but his strength suddenly deserted him, and he caught at an iron rail for support.

"Too late!" he groaned; "I have arrived too late to prevent the dire calamity. She has neglected my warning. What will become of her?"

End of the First Book.

BOOK II.

THE FLIGHT.

I.

A DINNER AT THE HÔTEL DES RÉSERVOIRS.

CAPTAIN MUSGRAVE, with his wife and Celia, had now been nearly three weeks in Paris. They had charming rooms at the Grand Hôtel.

Neither of the ladies had been in Paris before, and both were astonished by the magnificence of the peerless city. Captain Musgrave being very well acquainted with the French capital, took care they should see the best of its multitudinous sights. One day, having ascertained that the Grandes Eaux would play, he conducted them to Ver-

sailles. After inspecting the galleries of the palace, and admiring the superb terrace, the party descended to the Allé du Tapis Vert. It was thronged by a large and gaily dressed assemblage, a portion of which was promenading to and fro, while others were seated near the quinconces on the left, listening to the strains of an admirable military band.

Sophy thought the scene enchanting. The general air of gaiety pervading the groups, the exquisite toilettes of the ladies, and the varied uniforms of the numerous officers, conspired to give a lively character to the picture.

Both sisters, from their beauty, attracted considerable attention, though the remarks of the Parisian belles were not very complimentary to them. From what cause we will not pretend to say, but certain it is, that English ladies, however beautiful, do not appear to advantage among a

crowd of French dames, even though the personal charms of the latter may be inferior to their own. The stiffness of our fair countrywomen, of which the French justly complain, becomes more conspicuous when brought into contrast with the graceful and easy movements of the French dames, and brilliant complexions, rich tresses, and regular features do not please so much as expressive countenances, animated looks, and piquant manner.

It is certainly rather a trying ordeal to be exposed to the sarcastic looks and not always whispered remarks of a crowd of sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued Parisian dames while passing in review before them, and to feel conscious that every particle of your dress, from boot to bonnet, is commented upon; that your looks and gestures are mercilessly ridiculed, and every movement derided. Celia stood this fire with wonderful intrepidity, but Sophy shrank from it. Though opinions might

differ as to the charms of the English women, it was universally agreed that their companion was remarkably handsome — probably because he did not look like an Englishman.

Though Celia's beauty was not of the same high order as her sister's, she was more admired than Sophy, simply from her vivacity of manner. The severest female critic could not deny that Sophy's features were regular, that her eyes were fine, her tresses of a beautiful blond-doré, her figure perfect, and her toilette irreproachable. But all these attractions were neutralised by want of expression and rigidity of movement. Poor Sophy, it must be owned, had a singularly triste air for a bride. Yet there were some—at least among the male portion of the beholders—who thought that the gentle melancholy pervading her countenance was not without a special charm.

After walking down the allée as far as the

Bassin d'Apollon, our friends returned to the assemblage collected around the band. Having procured chairs for the ladies, Captain Musgrave left them to themselves for a short time. It was at this juncture that Celia, whose attention had been occupied for a moment by what was going on around her, remarked that her sister had become deadly pale, and was gazing eagerly into the adjoining bosquet, as if in search of some object.

"You look alarmed," cried Celia. "What is the matter?"

"I have seen him," replied Sophy, with an irrepressible shudder—"there, among those trees."

"Seen whom?"

"Him I have lost—to whose memory I have proved faithless. I have seen Julian. He was there among the trees—not fifty yards off. I saw him quite distinctly, and the reproachful look he cast upon me went to my very heart. I could not

bear it; but when I raised my eyes again he was gone. You look incredulous, but I saw him as plainly as I see you."

"Absurd!" cried Celia. "You will never have done thinking of Julian. You have seen some one resembling him, that is all. This is neither the time nor the place for the indulgence of such silly fancies. Dismiss the notion at once, and compose yourself before Scrope returns, or he will wonder what has happened."

Shortly afterwards Captain Musgrave came back with a chair, and seated himself beside them. Sophy stole an occasional timorous glance towards the bosquet, but no spectre could be descried within it. Occupied by what was passing around, Captain Musgrave paid little attention to her. By-and-by the assemblage dispersed in various directions to look at the fountains, which had begun to play.

After witnessing this magnificent display, our friends repaired to the Hôtel des Réservoirs, where dinner had been ordered. Many guests, numbering among them people of all nations, English, Americans, Germans, Spaniards, and Italians, were already assembled in the airy and agreeable salle-à-manger. At a large table near the door were seated a party of Americans of both sexes, well supplied with champagne. Next to them were some Germans, who had likewise made some progress with their dinner, and who were laughing and talking loudly. In the centre of the salon were collected a party of English excursionists, who were making themselves a nuisance to all the other guests by their continuous clamour to the garçons. More English folks were scattered about the room; but there was one party seated near an open window, which afforded a glimpse of other tables set beneath the trees of the garden, and to this party we must

direct attention. It consisted of five persons, and an experienced eye would have at once decided, from their looks and manner, that they were Londoners, and belonged to the eastern side of Temple Bar. There was an air about the principal personage that proclaimed him a citizen. He was no other than Mr. Flaxyard, the well-known and wealthy draper of Cheapside, who had brought his family to Paris. Mr. Flaxyard himself was short and stout, in age between sixty and seventy, with a bald shining head, white whiskers, ruddy complexion, common-place features, impossible to describe, because possessing no particular character, and only to be adequately represented by a photograph. Mrs. Flaxyard, of the Acacias, Clapham Common (for she wholly ignored Cheapside), was taller, and perhaps stouter than her lord, and had been accounted a very fine woman, and perhaps was so still, though rather on a large scale. She

had the advantage over Flaxyard of some twenty years in point of age; and this was something. Mr. and Mrs. Flaxyard were accompanied by their only son, Hornby, a young civic swell, who was rather above the business to which he was compelled by his governor to attend, and who was dressed in rather a loud style, especially in regard to necktie and vest, wearing a superfluity of chains, breast-pins, and rings, and boasting a pair of light Dundreary whiskers, of which he was excessively vain.

To complete the character Hornby had assumed, he thought it indispensable to wear an eye-glass, except when engaged in business. Theophania Flaxyard (Tiffany she was called by the elderly parties, and Tiff by her brother) was described by Hornby as a very jolly girl. Saucy-looking features, a retroussé nose, bright blue eyes, which she used pretty freely, sunny locks, and splendid teeth,

constituted Tiffany's charms. She was very fast in manner—much too fast for old Flaxyard, who frequently called her to order, but she paid very little attention to what he said, and always laughed at him. Tiffany had been brought up at a celebrated boarding-school at Clapham, and the finishing graces were imparted to her at a fashionable institution des demoiselles in the neighbourhood of the Champs-Elysées. Thus she considered herself a perfect Frenchwoman, and imagined she could talk, walk, and dress like a Parisian. If she had learnt nothing else, she had learnt to flirt and to base her notions of morals and conduct upon those expounded by French novels and French plays, to sigh for the most extravagant dresses, magnificent equipages, and a sumptuous mansion. But in spite of all the French varnish she had acquired, and which only brought out the defects of her native character more strongly, Tiffany Flaxyard was not hing more than a fast English girl.

With them was Mr. Rufus Trotter, the only son of a wealthy corn-broker, residing somewhere in the neighbourhood of Mark-lane. Rufus was the bosom friend of Hornby, and, like that young fellow, was an astonishing swell, wearing much the same style of attire, and embellishing his countenance with splendid beard of a glowing hue. Rufus was a very sharp fellow in his own estimation, as well as good looking, and had rather ambitious views, being determined to get into the best society — not the best City society, but the best society to be found in Belgrave-square or Eaton-square—and he was also determined to get into the House of Commons (as several of his City friends had recently done), where he fondly persuaded himself he should cut a figure, but he had been prevented from doing so by heavy railway losses recently sustained by Mr. Trotter, senior.

Rufus was an admirer of the bewitching Tiffany.

Not that he did not raise his eyes far higher—not that he did not feel sure he could marry an earl's daughter or a duke's sister, but somehow or other Tiffany had ensnared him. On her part, the fast young lady had by no means made up her mind to accept him, but liking admiration, she encouraged him. Still, she would have thrown him over without a moment's hesitation, if any one more eligible had turned up. The Flaxyards had been in Paris about a fortnight, on the way to Switzerland, and were staying at the Grand Hôtel, where they had seen Captain and Mrs. Musgrave and Miss Leycester at the table d'hôte, and constantly encountered them in the court-yard and in the public rooms. The younger folks were anxious to make the acquaintance of such very stylish-looking people, and Captain Musgrave, who thought something might be made of them, and who, besides, was rather pleased with Tiffany's appearance, condescended to meet them half way. He first talked

to the young men, then to Tiffany, who was quite ready to flirt with him, though she knew he had only just been married, and next presented his wife and sister to Mrs. Flaxyard and her daughter, so they all presently became good friends. The elder people were charmed with Sophy's beauty and amiable manner, and from various causes the younger folks got on very well together. Though not quite so fast as Tiffany, Celia was just as fond of flirting as that intrepid young woman, and she very considerately divided her attractions between Hornby and Rufus; but Sophy pleased them best, and young Flaxyard secretly regretted to his friend that he had not known Mrs. Musgrave before the captain was accepted. The new acquaintances had done Saint-Cloud, and Saint-Germain, and talked of doing Fontainebleau, but meantime they had agreed to dine together at Versailles, after witnessing the Grandes Eaux.

The ordering of the dinner had been entrusted

to Hornby and Rufus, and with the aid of the host they had contrived to make out a tolerably good menu. After many greetings and explanations as to why they had not met before, the whole party took their places, Sophy being seated between old Flaxyard and his son, Celia next to Rufus, and Captain Musgrave between Tiffany and her mother.

The dinner was excellent, quite as good, old Flaxyard declared, as one they had partaken of a few days before at Durand's, and the champagne soon did its duty, and loosened their tongues. Celia laughed and chattered gaily with her two neighbours—now raising the hopes of one, now of the other. Old Flaxyard did his best to amuse Sophy, and Tiffany talked with a freedom to Captain Musgrave that almost surprised him, accustomed as he was to fast girls. They talked of all sorts of things; of the charming toilettes and superb

equipages they had seen in the Bois, declaring they preferred the Bois a thousand times to Hyde Park; they talked about the galleries of Versailles and the charms of the Trianons; they talked of the grande-monde and the demi-monde, of high-born dames and actresses, of the fountains they had just seen, comparing them to those of the Crystal Palace, much to the disadvantage of the latter; the young men talked of Mabille and the Jardin des Fleurs, the Bouffes, and the cafés chantants, and Tiffany laughed at what they said; and as the dinner went on, and more champagne bottles were opened, the merriment of the party increased. There was one person, however, who, amid the general gaiety, continued absent and sad, ate little, declined champagne, and smiled not at the liveliest sallies.

A party of excursionists from the other side of the Channel, as we have said, occupied a central

table in the salle. They likewise drank a good deal of champagne, and being probably unaccustomed to such potations, rather too lively an effect was produced upon them, and they soon became boisterous, talking and laughing so loudly as to become an annoyance to the rest of the room. The garçons looked aghast; the guests at the surrounding tables stared in astonishment, and shrugged their shoulders; and our young friends were so disgusted at this display of bad manners on the part of their compatriots, that they seriously proposed to eject the noisy fellows from the room, and were only dissuaded from the attempt by old Flaxyard, who was apprehensive that a tremendous row would ensue.

"It is owing to the misconduct of such fellows as these that we have acquired such a bad name on the Continent," remarked Captain Musgrave. "No wonder the French call us a nation of shopkeepers."

"Such fellows as those ought to stay at home, since they don't know how to behave," remarked Hornby. "They make one ashamed of one's country."

"Not so loud," cried old Flaxyard. "They'll hear what you say."

"I don't care whether they hear or not," cried Hornby. "They are quite welcome to my opinion about them."

"And what may be your opinion about us, sir, I should like to know?" demanded one of the excursionists, with a fierce look. "Not that it's of much consequence. Still I should like to know it. What say you, Jennings?—and you, Blew-jones?"

"Yes, Jack Wigglesworth," rejoined the others, scowling at Hornby. "We should both like to know the fellow's opinion."

"Well, then, I've not the slightest objection

to oblige you," replied the young man, in an impertinent tone, and totally disregarding his father's looks. "My opinion of you is, that you are an infernal set of——"

"Hold your tongue, Hornby!" cried old Flaxyard. "I'll have no more of this. You'll get into a brawl."

"You were about to tell us what we are, sir," said Wigglesworth, rising and approaching the table. "Pray, what are we?"

"Yes, what are we?" added Blewjones, and Jennings following him.

"Infernal snobs, since you want to know," rejoined Hornby.

"Perhaps a stronger term might suit you better, and if so I have one at your service," supplemented Musgrave. "It's quite clear you don't know how to conduct yourselves in public."

"We didn't come to Paris to be taught manners

by fools like you," rejoined Wigglesworth, snapping his fingers. "If our society ain't agreeable, you can easily rid yourselves of it."

"We mean to do so," said Musgrave, significantly. "The sooner you make yourself scarce the better. Pay your bill and go, Wigglesworth. Garçon," he added, raising his voice, "l'addition pour ces messieurs."

"À l'instant, messieurs," cried the garçon, enchanted at the prospect of getting rid of the troublesome guests, while all the rest of the company seemed highly diverted by what was going on.

"What does he say?" cried Wigglesworth to his friends. "By Jove! I believe the fellow has ordered our bill."

"He's a cool customer, I must say," remarked Blewjones.

"Voilà, l'addition, messieurs," said the garçon, presenting it to them.

"Perhaps you'll pay it, since you have taken the trouble to order it," remarked Wigglesworth to Musgrave.

"Let's look at the amount?" cried the captain, snatching the bill from him. "Just sixty francs. Not dear for so much champagne, Wigglesworth. Give the garçon three naps and as much more as you please, and then you'll be free to depart," he added, tossing back the bill.

Disconcerted by Musgrave's assurance, and finding himself and his companions the laughing-stock of the whole room, Wigglesworth paid the garçon, and the whole party of excursionists beat a hasty retreat.

"I hope nothing will come of this ridiculous incident," remarked old Flaxyard, as soon as they were gone.

"You needn't give yourself a moment's thought about it, my dear sir," remarked Captain Musgrave, with a smile. "They're not the sort of men

to fight. They'll think twice before they send us an invitation to the Bois de Boulogne."

Another bottle of Larose was ordered, and when the garçon brought it he made an observation to old Flaxyard, which was not quite intelligible to that simple Briton.

"What does he say, Tiffy?" he called out to his daughter.

"He says that a gentleman outside desires to speak with you, papa," she replied.

"Bless me! that's strange. Won't the gentleman come in?"

The garçon replied that the gentleman would not come in.

"Are you quite sure there's no mistake?"

The garçon being quite sure there was none, old Flaxyard went out with him, and remained away so long that the Larose was finished before his reappearance.

II.

MR. FLAXYARD IS MADE USEFUL.

Now to see what old Flaxyard had been about. On going forth, in compliance with the summons he had received, he found in the court-yard of the hotel a tall personage, attired in black, whom the garçon indicated as the gentleman who had sent for him. The person was an entire stranger, but on seeing Flaxyard he advanced, and bowing gravely, addressed him by name, apologising for the liberty he had taken in sending for him. The

stranger then led the way through an archway at the back of the court-yard communicating with the gardens of the palace, where they could converse without fear of interruption.

"You will think it odd that I should be acquainted with your name, Mr. Flaxyard," he said, "but I ascertained it at the Grand Hôtel. I have seen you with Captain Musgrave and—his wife."

It was only by a great effort that he could force himself to pronounce the last word.

Flaxyard merely bowed assent, not knowing exactly what to say.

"It is in reference to Mrs. Musgrave"—and the stranger again paused, and put his hand to his side —"it is in reference to Mrs. Musgrave, I say, that I desire to speak to you."

"Perhaps you will permit me to know whom I have the honour of addressing?" asked Flaxyard.

"When I tell you that I am named Myddleton

Pomfret, and am a Madras merchant, I shall have conveyed very little to you, I fear."

"Pardon me, sir. If you are of the well-known house of Bracebridge, Clegg, and Pomfret, I *have* heard of you."

"I belong to that house," replied the other, with a melancholy smile. "And now, Mr. Flaxyard, you can render me an important service, and though I have no title whatever to ask it of you, yet I am persuaded you won't refuse me."

"You pay me a compliment, Mr. Pomfret. Let me hear what you require."

"You can serve another as well as me, sir. You can most materially serve a lady in whom I think you feel some interest."

"If you refer to Mrs. Musgrave, as I fancy you do, Mr. Pomfret, I can only say that I shall be delighted to be of service to her."

"I do refer to her. Before proceeding further,

I must entreat you not to misconstrue what I am about to say. I must also entreat you not to ask for an explanation, which I cannot give, but to be content with my statement."

"This is asking a good deal," remarked Flaxyard, staring at him.

"I know it," rejoined Pomfret. "It is impossible for me to hold any communication with Captain Musgrave. Consequently, the message which I desire to convey to his wife through you must be made without his knowledge."

"Without the captain's knowledge, did you say, sir?" cried Flaxyard, startled. "This appears to me an underhand proceeding — a very improper proceeding, sir, in which I must decline to take part."

"Don't mistake me," rejoined Pomfret, almost sternly. "Circumstances render it necessary. Were a meeting to take place between myself and

Captain Musgrave, it would be attended by fearful consequences. He has wronged me—wronged me deeply. I would call him to account, but my hands are tied."

"Whew! here's a pretty business!" thought Flaxyard. "I begin to perceive how matters stand. The poor gentleman has been jilted by a more fortunate rival. Well, I'm sorry for you, Mr. Pomfret—extremely sorry, I'm sure—but what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to give this letter to Mrs. Musgrave privately. You will easily find an opportunity."

"Very likely I might. But I decline to do it, sir," rejoined Flaxyard, with an offended air. "What do you take me for, Mr. Pomfret?"

"For a sensible, good-natured man, or I should not apply to you."

"Well, you are right so far," said Flaxyard.

"I *am* sensible and good natured, but I can't allow my good nature to drag me into a difficulty. I can't countenance an improper act. I can't deliver a letter to a married woman behind her husband's back."

"Perhaps I may remove your scruples, when I tell you it is not a letter, but simply an envelope enclosing bank-notes."

"Worse and worse!" cried Flaxyard, now really horrified. "Upon my word, Mr. Pomfret, you must have a very extraordinary opinion of me to venture to make such a proposition. Give a lady money secretly. Nothing of the kind, sir."

"Yes you will, when I tell you that the money which you will thus convey to Mrs. Musgrave is indispensable to her. If you refuse, I must find other means. But I rely on your secresy. I know I am dealing with a man of honour. You won't betray the lady."

"Betray her! certainly not," cried Flaxyard. "I shan't utter a word. But I don't choose to be made a go-between in an affair of this sort."

"Hear me before you decide. A moment may come—nay, most assuredly *will* come—when it may be necessary, as I have just hinted, that Mrs. Musgrave should not be without resources, and that her resources should be unknown to her husband. That is why I wish to send her this money. That is why I wish to employ you."

The energy of his looks and manner forced conviction of his sincerity upon his auditor.

"You seem to insinuate a great deal against Captain Musgrave," remarked Flaxyard. "Is he in difficulties?"

"Don't ask me," rejoined the other. "It is my business to protect the woman he has deceived, and I am obliged to adopt this course to accomplish my purpose."

"Well, I would willingly help you if I felt quite

sure you are acting in a straightforward manner. But you must allow that your proposition is singular, to say the least of it."

"You will regret hereafter, if you don't accede to my request."

"Well, I'll run the risk. Something in your manner satisfies me of your sincerity."

"I felt I could not be mistaken in you," said Pomfret, with a look of profound gratitude. "Here is the packet. Tell her she need not fear that I will intrude upon her, but I shall ever be ready to aid her in case of need."

"I will give her the packet in the manner you enjoin, sir, and will not fail to deliver your message at the same time."

They then separated. Myddleton Pomfret walked rapidly towards the great gates opening upon the Boulevart de la Reine, and Flaxyard returned to the hotel.

"I see by your looks that you've got some-

thing strange to tell us, papa," cried Tiffany, as the old gentleman entered the salle. "Out with it."

"Something very odd and unexpected has happened to me, I must own," replied Flaxyard. "But I can't explain it just now. Indeed, I'm not sure that I can explain it at all."

"Why, what a provoking old body you are!" cried Tiffany. "I thought you had brought a challenge from Mr. Wigglesworth, or one of those polite excursionists."

"I've seen nothing of Mr. Wigglesworth, or any of his crew," he replied. "But depend upon it I won't let you into my secret, Tiffy. Order some more Larose, Hornby. This bottle is empty, I perceive. I've something for your private ear by-and-by, ma'am," he added in a low voice to Mrs. Musgrave.

"For me?" she replied, startled.

Sophy had become so nervous of late that the slightest thing startled her.

"Yes, to you, ma'am," he replied, in the same under tone. "The gentleman who called me out sent for me in reference to you."

"Who is he? What can he possibly have to say to you about me? You excite my curiosity very strongly, Mr. Flaxyard."

"Excuse my answering any questions just now," replied the old gentleman, aware that Captain Musgrave was looking fixedly at him. "Don't give way to any emotion if you can possibly help it. The person who sent for me just now, and who has been talking about you, is Mr. Myddleton Pomfret, of Madras."

"Gracious Heaven! Is he here? Has he followed us to Paris?"

"Be calm, I entreat of you," whispered Flaxyard. "Your husband is watching you. You needn't be afraid of encountering Mr. Pomfret. He has returned to Paris."

But Sophy found it quite impossible to control her agitation, and presently rose from the table, and Mrs. Flaxyard and the other ladies withdrew with her. Captain Musgrave did not manifest any great uneasiness, but merely remarked,

"My wife is subject to nervous attacks, but she soon gets over them, and I have no doubt she will be better presently."

And so it proved. In less than a quarter of an hour the ladies reappeared, and though Sophy still looked very pale, she seemed to have recovered from her sudden indisposition.

III.

MR. FLAXYARD'S SUSPICIONS ARE AROUSED.

THE bill being paid, the party proceeded in a couple of carriages to the station appertaining to the Rive Droite, and shortly afterwards they were speeding towards the terminus in the Rue Saint-Lazare.

Mr. Flaxyard took charge of Sophy, and by a dexterous little manœuvre, which did the old gentleman infinite credit, contrived to place her in a carriage separate from the rest of the party. All the other occupants of this carriage appeared to

be French. They were thus enabled to converse without restraint; and almost as soon as they had started the old gentleman hastened to relieve her anxiety, by explaining what had passed between himself and Myddleton Pomfret. On concluding his recital he delivered the packet to her.

"I don't want to ask an impertinent question, ma'am," he said. "But I suppose Mr. Pomfret is an old friend?"

"I have never seen him—merely corresponded with him," she replied. "He was a friend of my first husband, Julian Curzon, and as such took a strong interest in me. But I imagined his interest would cease now that I have married again—and contrary to his wishes."

"How am I to understand you, ma'am?"

"I owe you a full explanation, Mr. Flaxyard, and you shall have it. Mr. Pomfret returned from India for the express purpose of preventing my

marriage with Captain Musgrave—but he arrived too late."

"Very strange! And you say you have never seen him?"

"Never. From a letter which I received from him I knew he was on his way to London, but I have heard nothing since. I have no idea what sort of person he is—whether young or old—and I have reason to believe that some descriptions given me of him were incorrect."

"I don't know how he has been described to you, but, according to my notion, he has a very interesting countenance. Though his beard is tinged with grey, he cannot, I conceive, be above five-and-thirty. But he appears to have suffered much, and looks out of health. He is tall and thin, and bears himself like a gentleman. Altogether, he is a very striking-looking person."

"It must be he! I have seen him!" exclaimed

Sophy, who had grown pale at this description. "I caught a glimpse of him among the trees in the gardens of Versailles this morning. I only beheld him for a moment, but I was struck by his countenance, because I thought him so like——"

And she paused.

"So like whom, ma'am?"

"My first husband," she replied. "He is the very image of poor Julian Curzon."

"That's strange!" exclaimed Flaxyard. "And you say they were bosom friends. Odd they should be personally alike—very odd, ain't it?"

"I tell you I only saw him for a moment, for he disappeared in the bosquet. I thought it was Julian risen from the dead."

"Pray excuse me for alluding to the subject, but I have heard, I think, that your first husband met his death by accident?"

"You have heard the truth, sir," she rejoined "He was drowned while bathing in the lake of Windermere."

"God bless me!—yes, now I remember the circumstance—very shocking indeed!"

"I witnessed the dreadful occurrence," said Sophy. "I saw him sink never to rise again, but I was denied the sad satisfaction of laying him in the grave."

"Am I to understand that the body was never recovered?" inquired Flaxyard.

"It was never recovered," she replied.

The old gentleman evidently wished to ask a few more questions, but he did not like to pursue the painful theme; and Sophy, whose thoughts were occupied by the past, maintained a mournful silence. At last, Flaxyard spoke.

"Will you allow me to ask you, ma'am, and believe that I am influenced by no idle curiosity in

putting the question—but are you acquainted with Mr. Myddleton Pomfret's history?"

"I never heard of him until about a year ago," she replied, "when he wrote to me from Madras explaining that he had been poor Julian's intimate friend, and offering to pay his debts."

"Oh! then your husband was in debt at the time of the accident?" inquired Flaxyard.

"Deeply in debt," she rejoined. "But all his debts were discharged by Mr. Pomfret."

"An extraordinary act of friendship," remarked the old gentleman, dryly.

"You would indeed think Mr. Pomfret a devoted friend, if you knew all he has done for me—for no other reason save that I was Julian's widow. The interest he has taken in my welfare seems unaccountable."

"Not quite unaccountable," muttered Flaxyard. "You say Mr. Pomfret came from Madras in order

to prevent your union with Captain Musgrave, but arrived too late. Didn't he write? Didn't he assign any reasons for his objection to the marriage?"

"He warned me against it, but reserved all explanations till his arrival."

"And you would not wait for him!" exclaimed Flaxyard, sharply. "Madam, you were wrong—very wrong."

"I now feel that I ought to have waited. But Captain Musgrave was impatient, and I yielded. The marriage was hurried on."

"Ah! it's a sad business!" cried the old gentleman. "I mean, it's a thousand pities you didn't await Mr. Pomfret's arrival. You might then have been saved from——"

"Saved from what? You quite frighten me, Mr. Flaxyard."

"You cannot doubt for a moment that so true a friend as Mr. Pomfret has shown himself must

have had some very powerful motive to induce him to come all the way from India for such a purpose."

"Indeed I thought so. But his motive was quite unintelligible, unless he had a personal interest in me."

"Well, what's done can't be undone, and you must make the best of it. But pray satisfy me on one point. Has Captain Musgrave any acquaintance with Mr. Pomfret?"

"Yes; they met in Madras, where Scrope was stationed. But they were not upon very good terms—in fact, they quarrelled. And it is certain that they entertain a strong antipathy to each other. This may account in some degree for Mr. Pomfret's objection to my union with one whom he regards as an enemy. Scrope was equally bitter; but I felt he was prejudiced, and my heart refused to believe all the ill he said of my benefactor."

"Have you reason to suppose, ma'am, that Captain Musgrave and Mr. Pomfret met for the first time at Madras?" inquired the old gentleman, after a pause. "Had they no previous acquaintance?"

"I believe not," replied Sophy. "Indeed, I feel certain that Scrope knew nothing whatever about Mr. Pomfret till he met him at Madras?"

"Knew nothing of his antecedents?"

"I fancy not. I never heard him say so. Latterly I have never ventured to speak to Scrope about Mr. Pomfret, for he detests the mention of his name."

"Madam," said Flaxyard, "I cannot disguise from you that you are placed in an embarrassing position. You ought not to have married Captain Musgrave until you had heard what Mr. Pomfret had to say. That is the mistake you have committed, and I am afraid it may prove a grave mistake. I cannot acquit Mr. Pomfret of blame. He ought to have spoken out; but I can under-

stand why he hesitated, and I feel persuaded that he has acted with the best intentions. I would rather not say what I think of Captain Musgrave's conduct. Though Mr. Pomfret has more reason to complain than any one, I think you have nothing to apprehend from him. Unless I greatly misjudge him, his sole desire is to serve you, and he will submit to any annoyance rather than injure you. No, no; you have nothing to fear from *him*."

"Mr. Flaxyard, you have made some discovery which you are unwilling to impart to me—I am sure you have."

"Do not press for any explanation, ma'am. I may be wrong in my suspicions, and I trust in Heaven I am so. But whatever comes and goes, I will serve you as a friend, and do my best to extricate you from difficulties, should any unhappily arise."

"You fill me with alarm. Speak plainly, I en-

treat of you. I would rather know the worst than be kept in suspense."

"Madam, I know nothing. Therefore I can tell you nothing. I have felt it necessary to caution you, because I have some vague suspicions, but they may amount to little."

Sophy asked no further questions, and scarcely another word passed between them till they reached the station.

The whole party drove to the Grand Hôtel, but the high spirits of the younger people were too much for Sophy in her present frame of mind. Pleading fatigue, she retired at once to her chamber.

IV.

CAPTAIN MUSGRAVE SHOWS HIMSELF IN HIS TRUE COLOURS.

TERRIBLE fancies, excited by the hints thrown out by Mr. Flaxyard, disquieted Sophy and banished sleep. One strange and painful notion possessed her. She felt as if she had unintentionally committed some crime, for which a fearful penalty would be exacted. At last, towards morning, worn out by agitation and fatigue, she fell into a profound sleep, from which she did not awaken till a late hour.

The Musgraves, as we know, occupied a charm-

ing set of apartments on the second floor of the Grand Hôtel, and on issuing forth into the principal room, Sophy found her sister alone, and seated at a table on which materials for breakfast were laid.

"Why, how late you are!" cried Celia. "Scrope has breakfasted long ago, and has gone out to see the guard relieved at the Tuileries."

"Did he leave any message for me?" inquired Sophy.

"Only that he shouldn't be back before noon. I fear, from your looks, you must have had a wretched night. Sit down, dear," she continued, anxiously; "if you can manage to eat a little breakfast it will do you good. I fear these French dinners don't agree with you. Take a cup of tea, if you can take nothing else."

Sophy drank the tea poured out by her sister, but she was quite unable to eat anything, and after

a time the breakfast equipage was removed by the garçon.

About a quarter of an hour later a tap was heard at the door, and Mrs. Flaxyard and her daughter came in. As we know, they were staying at the same hotel. They had got on their bonnets, and being about to order new dresses from a fashionable modiste in the Rue Vivienne, they wanted Mrs. Musgrave and Celia to accompany them. Sophy excused herself on the plea of indisposition, so they did not press her. But Celia was enchanted at the idea. Nothing she liked so much as a visit to a milliner's, so she got ready without a moment's delay. The three ladies then sallied forth, leaving Sophy alone—quite alone, indeed, for the lady's-maid she had brought from London had been sent back, and she was now without an attendant.

Half an hour passed by, and Sophy was still un-

disturbed. She was reclining on a fauteuil, vainly essaying to read *Galignani's Messenger*. All at once she was roused by the entrance of her husband. Their greeting was not like that of a recently married pair, and there was far more of fear than of love in the look which Sophy threw at her lord as he stalked into the room. Evidently something had displeased him. He merely nodded, and then, without bestowing another look upon her, deliberately took off his gloves and placed them inside his hat on the table. This done, he flung himself upon a sofa opposite the fauteuil on which she was seated. For some minutes he kept silence, but at last he addressed her in an angry voice:

"How long is this sort of thing going to last? Because I don't mean to stand it, I can tell you."

"What sort of thing, Scrope?" she inquired, meekly.

"You know well enough what I mean—your sulkiness. I'm getting confoundedly tired of it. I didn't come to Paris to pass my time with a peevish and fretful woman, but to be amused. Ever since you've set foot in France you have become totally changed—changed for the worse, both in looks and manner. You don't make an attempt to be agreeable to me. Perhaps you haven't got the inclination. It appears like it. But I wouldn't advise you to carry the thing too far. I'm not the easiest-tempered fellow in the world, and may chance to retaliate."

"I've not the slightest intention to offend you, Scrope, and am pained to think I have done so," she rejoined, gently. "I know I have been dull and triste, but you must forgive me. Unhappily, my spirits are not under my control, and to-day I am far from well."

"It's a confounded bore to have married a com-

plaining woman," said Musgrave, harshly. "I can't understand why you should be in low spirits, unless you regret the step you've taken. Most women, I fancy, contrive to look cheerful during the honeymoon."

"I don't deserve these reproaches, Scrope—indeed I don't," she rejoined, unable to repress her tears.

"No use whimpering," he said, almost savagely. "It won't have the slightest effect on me. I've told you I can't stand low spirits. To please me you must smile."

"How can I possibly smile at this moment, Scrope? You really frighten me by your looks."

"Do I? Then you're very easily frightened. Why can't you borrow a little of Celia's sprightliness? She's never peevish or out of spirits."

"Celia has not the sad things to think of that I have, Scrope," sighed Sophy. "She is thought-

less and light-hearted, and I hope may long continue so."

"Well, I can see very plainly that you expect to have your own way—but you're mistaken, I can promise you. If you have been disappointed, so have I. But we may, perhaps, get on together if we can come to a proper understanding. Of one thing you may be certain. I won't have any more nonsense."

"If you call my illness 'nonsense,' Scrope, I'm afraid I shan't be able to obey you. But I will do my best."

"I know what has caused this fit of sullens," he said, regarding her fixedly. "You have had some communication with Myddleton Pomfret. It is useless to deny it. I know you have."

She made no response, but cast down her eyes to avoid his searching glances.

"He is in Paris! Have you seen him?" he demanded, after a pause.

"I have not exchanged a word with him. But I fancy I beheld him yesterday in the gardens of Versailles."

"Ah! you own to seeing him. Of course you have heard from him. Give me his letter, I command you."

This was too much, and Sophy roused herself.

"You forget yourself, Captain Musgrave, in addressing me thus. I have received no letter from Mr. Myddleton Pomfret. But if I had, I would not show it you."

"Ah! you defy me. Well, we shall see how long you will hold out. This equivocation won't pass with me. I am certain you have had some communication with the fellow — curse him! I insist upon knowing what message he has sent."

"I decline to give an answer to the question. And I think it better we should have no further conversation together till you are in a better temper."

And she made a motion of retiring, but Captain Musgrave sprang suddenly to his feet, and detained her.

"Stop! I have not done with you yet. We must finish what we have begun. What do you know about this person?"

"Nothing more than I have told you," she replied, trembling.

"It is an infernal lie," cried Musgrave, fiercely. "You know who he is."

"I saw him only for a moment," she cried, distractedly.

"But that was enough. You could not fail to recognise him. I read your guilty knowledge in your looks. It is in vain to hide it from me. You recognised him, I say."

"Then it was not a mere fancied resemblance, she cried. "It was Julian! and living!"

"Ay, it was Julian," rejoined Musgrave.

"Oh," she exclaimed, in a tone of indescribable anguish, "this is more than I can bear. I shall go mad. But no! no!—it cannot be. Julian perished before my own eyes. I saw him plunge into the lake, and disappear for ever."

"Not for ever," rejoined Musgrave, with a sneer. "Was the body found? I ask you that. No; it was not likely to be found. The catastrophe which you thought you had witnessed, and which filled you with desolation, was nothing more than a clever device by which Julian hoped to escape from his creditors and from his wife. It succeeded to a marvel. No one even suspected the trick. While you were weeping—while others were searching for him—he was far away, chuckling at his escape. If the affair were not too serious, it might move one's laughter."

"No more — say no more," she cried. "The frightful truth becomes clear. I see it all now.

I ought to have seen it from the first. Oh, into what an abyss has my fatal blindness plunged me! By the irretrievable step which I have taken I have condemned myself to ceaseless misery. My breast will never know peace again. Scrope, you have much to answer for. You knew the truth, but concealed it from me. No consideration for two innocent persons moved you. You allowed me to commit a crime in ignorance which you were bound to prevent. And what have you gained by your wicked act? You have destroyed my happiness for ever. You have destroyed poor Julian's happiness. If you have any feeling left, you must shudder at your own work."

"You ask me what I have gained," replied Musgrave, who remained perfectly impassive during this address. "I will tell you. I have satisfied my revenge."

"Revenge for what? What injury has the un-

fortunate Julian done you that you should avenge yourself upon him in this dreadful manner?"

"I shan't gratify your curiosity by explaining the cause of my vindictive feeling towards Myddleton Pomfret, as I shall still call him," he rejoined. "Suffice it that he affronted me—deeply affronted me—and as I never forgive an injury, I determined on revenge. No opportunity for executing my purpose occurred while I was in India. But I abided my time. Not long after my return to England, chance threw in my way what I so eagerly longed for. I saw you, and was struck with your beauty—for you were beautiful then."

"Oh, that we had never met!" she exclaimed, in accents of despair.

"It was written that we should meet," continued Musgrave. "I saw and loved you. I knew nothing whatever about you then, and no other feel-

ing was kindled in my breast save admiration of your charms. But next day I learnt more, and soon obtained a clear insight into your position. On my way to call upon you, St. Quintin acquainted me with your history, and, to my surprise, I learnt your singular connexion with the detested Myddleton Pomfret. From the first my suspicions were aroused, and though I had never heard a hint breathed on the subject while at Madras, I became convinced, on reflection, that your correspondent could be no other than Julian Curzon, whom the rest of the world—yourself among the number—supposed to have been drowned in Windermere. Was it likely that a man would pay his friend's debts without some extraordinary motive? Was it likely he would make a friend's widow so large an allowance from purely disinterested motives? I understood his motives at once. But there was proof conclusive.

Myddleton Pomfret's arrival in Madras was nearly coincident with the date of Julian Curzon's supposed death, just allowing time for the voyage out to India. All doubts, therefore, were removed from my mind. The revenge for which I thirsted was in my power. My enemy was delivered into my hands. Not only had I penetrated his secret —not only did I comprehend his motives, but I divined his plans, and I determined to defeat them —to defeat them so effectually that the mischief done should be irreparable. I saw that he intended to return to England when he had made a fortune, and avow what he had done. But he had not calculated upon what might happen in the interim. It was a pretty project—a kindly project —and deserved to succeed; but there were difficulties in the way. He had not taken my animosity into account. To be sure, he didn't think it probable that I should cross his path. But you will

remember how his fears were excited when he learnt that you knew me."

"Ah! I now perceive the justice of his fears. I ought to have paid attention to his caution. But had you no compunction?"

"None. I have told you I never forgive an injury. When my enemy was in my power, was I to let him escape? Moreover, love with me is just as strong as hate; and loving you passionately, as I did at the time, I would never have surrendered you to another. These mingled feelings —either of which was strong enough to cause me to disregard all consequences—determined me to make you mine. I had no fear of a refusal on your part, for I felt sure that I had gained a sufficient influence over you, and that I had only to go on to triumph. My sole apprehension was, that Myddleton Pomfret should arrive in time to thwart my project. He nearly did so, but his evil

genius stopped him on the way. My revenge was complete."

There was a pause, during which Sophy appeared overcome by emotion. At last she spoke.

"You have acted infamously, Scrope. You have led me into the commission of a sin which can only be expiated by a life's penitence. My own wretchedness is increased by the thought of the hopeless misery into which your vindictive cruelty has plunged a noble-hearted man. Better have killed him than inflict such pain. Had I been the only sufferer my anguish would have been more tolerable, but it is heightened by the knowledge of his suffering. Your plan has succeeded. The evil agents you have summoned have served you well. But your triumph will be short-lived. The ill you have done will recoil on your own head. Be sure that a terrible retribution awaits you."

"Bah! I laugh at such talk!" he rejoined, carelessly. "It may tell upon the stage, but it won't do in private life. If you imagine I have any fear of Myddleton Pomfret, you are egregiously mistaken. But I peremptorily forbid you to grant him an interview on any pretence, or to hold any communication with him. Take care you obey me."

"I do not desire to see him," she cried. "Of all men on earth, I would most avoid him."

"Still he may attempt to see you, and I would have you be on your guard. You need apprehend no trouble from him. Very shame will restrain him from resuming his former name. Myddleton Pomfret he must remain, and no other. Julian Curzon is dead to the world."

"I have no fear of him," she rejoined. "He is too good—too generous—to molest me."

"Talk of him no more," cried Musgrave, im-

patiently. "His name sickens me. I have said enough, I think, to warn you. My stay in Paris will be brief. I shall proceed almost immediately to Nice."

"You will go where you please, Scrope," she rejoined. "But you must not expect me to accompany you."

"Not expect you to accompany me! But I do," he cried, sharply. "Do you suppose I mean to leave you behind? Don't think it."

"I am not your wife, Scrope," she rejoined. "You have convinced me that my first husband is alive."

"You are a fool!" he cried, furiously. "If I choose to consider you as my wife, and to treat you as such, that ought to be enough. Your secret is in safe keeping. It is only known to me and to one other, and for good reasons he will never betray it. You *are* my wife, I tell you, so

let us have no more nonsense on the subject. Go to your own room. Dry your eyes and compose yourself. Celia will be back presently, and she mustn't find you in this state. Away, I tell you."

Sophy looked at him as if she had something to say, but she left it unsaid, and withdrew into the inner room.

"I'm deuced glad it's got over," mentally ejaculated Musgrave as he was left to himself. "If I hadn't stopped the matter at the onset, there would have been no end of bother with her. Sooner or later she must have learnt the truth, and now she is aware that she is entirely in my power she'll be more manageable. If not—well, I won't think of that just yet."

Half an hour afterwards, when Celia returned, accompanied by Mrs. Flaxyard and Tiffany, they found him lounging on the sofa, smoking a cheroot and reading *Galignani*. To judge from his looks,

no one would have suspected that anything had disturbed him. All traces of anger had disappeared from his handsome countenance. Little recked he of the anguish endured by poor Sophy, who was on her knees in the next room, praying fervently for strength and guidance. Once, feeling curious, he had gone to the door, but finding it fastened, he gave himself no further concern about her.

On the entrance of the three ladies, he entered into a lively chat with them, and listened to the details of their visit to Madame Frontin's with the greatest apparent interest. Rather surprised that Sophy did not make her appearance, as she must have heard their voices and laughter, Celia went in search of her, and, after a little unexpected delay, obtained admittance to the inner room. Here she remained some minutes, during which Captain Musgrave continued his discourse

with Tiffany. When Celia came forth again her countenance was changed in its expression.

"My sister hopes you will excuse her," she said. "She feels very unwell—quite unequal to conversation."

"Dear me! I'm excessively sorry to hear it," cried Mrs. Flaxyard, in a commiserating tone. "Is there anything we can do for her?"

"Let me go in to her," said Tiffany. "I'm sure I can manage to cheer her up."

"Thank you, my love, no," rejoined Celia. "She will be best kept perfectly quiet."

"Well, say all that's kind to her from us," observed Mrs. Flaxyard. "I hope we shall see her again later on in the day."

Hereupon the two ladies took their departure.

"Scrope," said Celia, as soon as they were gone, "I fear you and Sophy have had a quarrel."

"We have had a few words," he replied, care-

lessly. "That confounded Myddleton Pomfret is in Paris, and I spoke to her rather angrily about him. I hate the fellow, as you know. Go and see what you can do with her."

"Shall I tell her you're very sorry for being so cross?" remarked Celia.

"Yes, do. You had better have dinner in your own room to-day, for I'm sure Sophy won't go out. I am going to Vincennes. On my return I shall dine at Brebon's. I may look in at the Palais Royal, where they have a laughable piece. Au revoir!"

Putting on his hat and gloves, and lighting another cheroot, he went out, while Celia re-entered her sister's room.

V.

MR. FLAXYARD IS AGAIN MADE USEFUL.

THE sisters had been alone together nearly an hour, during which scarcely a word had passed between them, when a tap was heard at the door of the principal room, and going to see who was there, Celia found Mr. Flaxyard. It was evident from his manner that the old gentleman had something important to communicate, and without preface he told Celia that he wished to see her sister.

"I am afraid you can't see her just now, Mr.

Flaxyard," Celia replied. "She is very unwell. Can I convey a message to her?"

"No, thank you. I have a word to say to her in private. Pray tell her I am here. She will see me."

"I'm by no means sure of it. But we can but try," rejoined Celia, wondering what he could have to say.

With this she went into the inner room, and the result proved that the old gentleman was right, for almost immediately afterwards Sophy came forth. She looked pale as death, and it was easy to perceive she had been weeping.

"I am very sorry to intrude upon you, Mrs. Musgrave," said Flaxyard, in accents of profound commiseration, "but I know you will excuse me. I have just seen——"

A glance of caution from Sophy caused him to lower his voice, and he added:

"I have just seen Mr. Myddleton Pomfret."

"Has he said anything further to you?" cried Sophy.

It was now the old gentleman's turn to enjoin caution.

Glancing significantly towards the inner room, he replied, in a low voice:

"He has charged me to give this letter to you, madam."

Sophy trembled so violently that she could scarcely hold the letter which he placed in her hand.

"I promised to bring him an answer," said the old gentleman, watching her with deep interest.

With trembling fingers Sophy opened the letter, but a film gathered before her eyes, and prevented her for a moment from distinguishing the writing. At last she read as follows:

"I beg you to grant me an interview, and

without delay. It is absolutely necessary that I should give you some explanation before leaving Paris. To-morrow I shall be far away.

"It might compromise you were I to present myself at your apartments, and there would be risk of an unpleasant encounter were I even to enter the hotel. I have, therefore, made such arrangements as I trust will prevent accident, and save you trouble.

"In the court-yard of the hotel you will find a carriage waiting for you. The coachman will drive you to the Bois de Boulogne, whither I shall precede you, and will set you down at a spot in the Allée de Longchamps, which I have described to him. Arrived there, you will alight. Enter the wood on the left, and you will find me.

"Do not refuse my request. It is the last I shall prefer to you. We shall only meet to exchange an eternal adieu!"

There was no signature to the letter.

So much was Sophy overcome by its perusal, that she would have given vent to her distress if the old gentleman had not checked her.

"Recollect that your sister is in the next room," he said, "and that there is a very thin partition between us."

When Sophy had in some degree mastered her emotions, he inquired:

"What answer shall I return to him?"

"I cannot write," she replied. "But tell him," she added, with a great effort—"tell him I will come."

"I am glad you have so decided," he replied, earnestly. "I am sure you need not fear to meet him. I will convey your message to him instantly."

So saying, he bowed and withdrew.

The noise caused by shutting the door an-

nounced his departure to Celia, who at once issued from the inner room. The liveliest curiosity was painted on her countenance.

"Well, am I to learn the meaning of this mysterious visit?" she cried.

"I am going out immediately—that is all I have to tell you," rejoined Sophy.

"Going out!" cried the other, in astonishment. "Where to?"

"To the Bois de Boulogne, to meet Mr. Myddleton Pomfret," replied Sophy, calmly.

"Well, I declare I never heard of anything so shocking!" exclaimed Celia, staring at her with the utmost astonishment. "And you look as innocent as if wholly unaware of the impropriety of the proceeding. What will Scrope say?"

"He will know nothing about it."

"There you are mistaken. I shall make a point of telling him."

"Do as you think proper. I shall go. You may accompany me if you choose."

"That renders the step less objectionable. Mind, I protest very strongly against it. But since you are resolved to go, you shan't go alone. I may as well tell you that Scrope is gone to Vincennes, and won't return till late, as he means to dine at Brebon's, and go to the theatre in the Palais Royal afterwards, so you needn't fear meeting him."

Scarcely noticing what was said, Sophy hastily made the necessary preparations for going out. Celia used equal despatch, and both sisters were ready at the same moment.

Though she had screwed her courage to the sticking-point, Sophy felt considerable trepidation as she descended the great staircase. As usual, a number of persons were upon it, but there was not an acquaintance among them.

On gaining the court-yard she perceived a hand-

some dark coupé, standing a little in advance of the other equipages, and the coachman, who was evidently on the alert, seemed at once to recognise her. As she approached, he called out to a page in the livery of the hotel to open the carriage door.

No sooner were the two ladies seated inside the coupé, than without waiting for orders the coachman drove through the broad porte cochère, and then along the boulevart in the direction of the Madeleine. There is scarcely an hour in the day when this part of the Boulevart des Capucines is not crowded with carriages, omnibuses, and vehicles of all sorts, but the ladies met with no interruption, and were soon speeding along the gay Champs Elysées. Numberless carriages and equestrians were here to be seen, but Sophy was too much absorbed by her own painful reflections to pay any attention to them. She sat as far back as she could in the carriage. Celia, however, enjoyed the

brilliant spectacle, and kept continually calling her sister's attention to some splendid equipage or to some marvellous toilette. But in vain; Sophy never raised her eyes.

At length the superb Avenue de l'Impératrice was traversed amid an undiminished throng of carriages, and passing through the Porte Dauphine, the ladies entered the crowded Bois.

Skirting the lower lake, they took a winding road on the right, which soon brought them to the Allée de Longchamps, along which they proceeded.

Presently they reached a thick part of the wood, and the coachman stopped at a spot on the left of the road.

"Here I am to meet him," said Sophy, looking very pale, but very determined. This is the place of rendezvous."

"Are you going to alight?" inquired Celia.

"Yes," replied Sophy, opening the door of the carriage.

Both got out, and striking into a little path which lay before them, entered the wood.

They had not proceeded far, when the tall dark figure of a man could be distinguished among the trees, about fifty yards off. It was evident that he had seen them, but on perceiving that Sophy was not alone had retreated.

"Wait for me here," said Sophy. "You cannot be present at the interview."

VI.

THE MEETING.

THE person whom Sophy expected to meet had retired into a side-path on the right, leading into a thicker part of the wood, and on reaching this path she beheld him about twenty or thirty paces off, moving slowly on in the opposite direction. The light sound of her footsteps caught his ear, and he turned.

It was he!

Yes, it was he, whom she had so long mourned as lost; whom she never expected to behold again

on earth; and who was brought back only to be taken away.

Yes, it was he. Anxiety and the influences of a fierce climate had done their work upon him. He looked full ten years older than when he had disappeared. His lofty figure was wasted, but still symmetrical; his countenance bore traces of suffering, and seemed stamped with settled gloom, but it had not lost its noble outline. Changed he might be to others, but to her he was unaltered. While gazing at his features, and feeling those well-remembered eyes fixed upon her with an unutterable expression of tenderness, pity, and reproach, she ceased almost to breathe, and must have fallen to the ground if he had not flown to her assistance.

Return to entire consciousness, which did not take place under a couple of minutes, was evidenced by a profound sigh proceeding from the

very depths of her breast. For a moment only did she look into his face. For a moment only did she feel the contact of his arm. A thrill of horror then pervaded her frame, and collecting all her energies, she withdrew from his support.

It seemed as if the unhappy pair had only come together to mingle their tears. He had much to say, but his voice was suffocated by emotion. Sophy spoke first.

"I dare not ask your forgiveness, Julian," she said, in accents that pierced his heart like points of steel, "for the irreparable wrong I have done you, though it was done unwittingly. I well know that forgiveness for a fault like mine is impossible, but as I know you to be just and generous, I feel you will not utterly condemn me."

"Condemn you, Sophy!" he cried. "I do not even reproach you. How can I do so when I alone am to blame? I do not attempt to exculpate

myself. I am the cause of all the misery that afflicts us both. Had it been possible, the terrible truth should have been concealed from you. But it is necessary you should be made aware of the exact position in which you are placed, in order that a worse calamity may be avoided."

"What worse calamity can there be than that which I now endure? For me there is no more hope in this world. I must expiate my offence in tears and penitence. Oh, why were you not more explicit? Why did you allow me to remain so long in ignorance of the truth? Why did you allow me to commit this crime?"

"I can offer no excuse," he rejoined, in a sombre tone. "As I am the author of the crime, so ought I to bear the punishment, and I hope Heaven will spare you, however severely it may afflict me. But I will try to explain the motives of my conduct, though I feel it to be wholly indefensible.

The history of the last few years of my life will be quickly told, and it is proper you should hear it. Else you cannot judge me rightly."

He paused for a moment, and then went on:

"On that dread night which you cannot fail to remember, and which it pains me to recal, when I was environed by difficulties, and when I thought I had forfeited your love, my first desperate impulse was to end my woes by self-destruction. What, indeed, had I to live for? But suddenly, and as if by some merciful interposition, my ideas changed, and I was spared this crime at least. Picturing to myself how I would act if I could begin life anew, I came at last to the determination of carrying out the plan I had conceived. You know how I executed the project, or can guess, so it is not needful to enter into details."

"You executed it so well, that you imposed upon me as upon all others," she remarked. "But

if you had taken me into your confidence, Julian, you would have spared me frightful suffering."

"Had I done so, my project would have failed. It was owing to your entire ignorance of the scheme that it succeeded so well. But do not imagine that I did not feel for you profoundly. I did. Nevertheless, my resolution remained unshaken. I had taken all necessary precautions, and concealed a change of attire in the copse bordering the lake. I had also a sufficient sum of money for any purpose. Within three hours after my plunge into the lake, I was seated in an express train, and on the way to London."

"And I had given you up for lost, and was with those who sought for your body," she rejoined. "Oh! Julian, if you had seen me then, you would have pitied me. You would not have left me."

"I should not. Therefore I fled. The plan I had conceived was to go out to India—to Madras

—where I had a near relative, Mr. Bracebridge, a prosperous merchant, on whose friendship I could depend. I was obliged to halt for a day in London, in order to procure the necessary outfit for my journey, but I took care to keep out of the way of my old acquaintances. I put up at the hotel near the London Bridge station, and assumed the name of Myddleton Pomfret, which I have ever since retained, and which I shall now never discontinue. As soon as I had made all preparations, I crossed the Channel, and proceeded, without stoppage, to Marseilles. If I had laid out my plan beforehand, it could not have been better contrived. All fell out well. Within twenty-four hours after my arrival at Marseilles the Overland Mail started for Alexandria. Again I was favoured. Not one among my fellow-passengers knew me. But the *Times* had been brought on board, and in it I read the account of my own 'accidental death,' and heard some comments upon it, which made

me laugh bitterly. I learnt the estimation in which I was held. The voyage was speedy and prosperous, and in due time I arrived at Madras. I had not miscalculated my influence with Mr. Bracebridge. I concealed nothing from him. At first he was very angry, pointed out the consequences of the rash and inconsiderate step I had taken, and insisted upon my immediate return, but in the end he yielded to my entreatics, and consented to aid my plan. This he did most effectually by making me a partner in his house. His confidence in me was not misplaced. I wanted knowledge and experience, and, above all, habits of business, but I made up for these deficiencies by untiring industry, and soon mastered my new position. Mr. Bracebridge had reason to congratulate himself on possessing a good working partner, for in a couple of years I had helped him to double his business."

"During all this time did you bestow no thought

on the unhappy wife you had deserted, and who mourned you as dead?" asked Sophy.

"You were never absent from my thoughts," he rejoined. "It was for you that I toiled—for you that I sought to realise a fortune. And as my endeavours promised to be successful, I persuaded myself that we should not long be kept apart. Fool, madman that I was to suppose you could, or would, wait for me! I should have returned sooner, but circumstances delayed my departure. Mr. Bracebridge was carried off suddenly by cholera, and the entire management of the business devolved upon me, for my other partner took no active interest in it. But though I could not return, I resolved no longer to defer the execution of my scheme—the first step being the payment of my debts. From a trusty correspondent, who, however, was wholly ignorant of my motives for making the inquiry, I had obtained constant in-

formation respecting you, and knew that you were residing in Yorkshire with your father in perfect retirement. I therefore wrote to you, and since you received my letters, it is not necessary to enter into further details respecting them. Neither will I attempt to describe my transports of delight at the sight of your well-known handwriting. Had you seen me press your letter to my lips, you could not have doubted my love for you."

Here he paused, and a minute or two elapsed before he could resume his narrative.

"I now come to a painful portion of my story," he said, evidently speaking with great effort; "but it must be told. At the time of his death, Mr. Bracebridge was a widower, having lost his wife some years before. He had only one child, a daughter, to whom he was devotedly attached, and he left her all his property, appointing me her guardian, and with his last breath committing her

to my charge. I promised to watch over her, and I have kept my promise."

Sophy uttered a slight exclamation.

"When she sustained this heavy bereavement, Eva Bracebridge was not much more than seventeen, but in appearance and manner she was a woman. She had not long arrived from England, where she had been educated, and her surpassing beauty created an extraordinary sensation at Madras. Already she had received many offers for her hand, but she declined them. Naturally, I was thrown much into her society, and her vivacity served to dispel the gloom that frequently beset me. She often rallied me upon my melancholy, declaring that I looked like the Corsair or the Giaour, or some other of Lord Byron's moody heroes. 'Come, confess, what have you done, Mr. Pomfret?' she would say, playfully. 'Something dreadful, I'm certain.' It may sound like

vanity, but I know you will acquit me of any such feeling, when I say that a suspicion sometimes crossed me that, most unintentionally, I had excited a tender interest in this fair young creature's breast. Had not my heart been engaged I could not have resisted her fascinations."

"Did you resist them, Julian?" said Sophy.

"You need not ask the question," he rejoined, coldly. "Prepare yourself. You will have need of all your courage for what I am about to relate. At this juncture the Bengal Rifles were quartered at Madras. Among the officers was one who was accounted exceedingly handsome, and who plumed himself upon his successes with your sex. He had already caused two or three serious scandals, which were much talked about, but which he fancied redounded to his credit. Mr. Bracebridge, who was very hospitable, like every Indian merchant, naturally invited him, and he was intro-

duced to Eva. He could not fail to be struck with her beauty, and was at no pains to conceal the impression it produced upon him. Mr. Bracebridge kept almost open house, and having been once invited, the enamoured officer came when he pleased, and had abundant opportunities of practising all the arts he was a master of to win Eva's affections. But she cared nothing for him, and mortified him bitterly by her indifference."

"Oh, she did well," cried Sophy. "Would I had acted so!"

"In spite of Eva's manifest coldness to him—a coldness almost amounting to aversion—he persevered," pursued Pomfret, becoming still more sombre as he proceeded. "He was unaccustomed to defeat, and persuaded himself he should triumph in the end. How was an inexperienced girl to resist him when so many artful women had succumbed? He was still occupied in the fruitless

attempt when Mr. Bracebridge died, and, as I have already stated, Eva became my ward. Up to this point her beauty alone had influenced her admirer, but now she had the additional attraction of wealth, a large fortune being assured to her on coming of age, or on marriage, by her father's will. The prize must be won, but his chances of gaining it were even slighter than before, and at Eva's solicitation I begged him to desist from his suit, telling him it was utterly hopeless. He was very angry, and said, in an insolent tone, 'I see through your design. You don't like to part with the girl. You flatter yourself she loves you. But you're mistaken. I'll have her yet.' It was with difficulty that I controlled myself, but desiring, for Eva's sake, to avoid a quarrel with him, I made no reply to his taunts, and perhaps attributing my forced calmness to cowardice, he went away with a menacing and contemptuous look. I thought I had done

with him. But the worst was to come. What I have now to tell will prove that I was justified in writing of him as I did to you."

"I doubt it not," said Sophy, sadly.

"Though Eva had seen but little of her father, she suffered much from his death, and I suggested her return to England, but she declined, saying she liked India, and would remain out for another year, or till such time as I could take her back, for I had often spoken to her of my own wish to return. To this I could offer no objection; but as I thought change of scene really desirable for her, I advised her to go to Ootacumand, on the Neilgherry Hills, where her poor father had possessed a charming retreat, which now, of course, belonged to her. She consented, but on the express understanding that I would shortly join her. Next day she set out on the journey, which was to occupy about a week. As it turned out, I could

not have acted more unwisely than in recommending the journey. A detachment of the Bengal Rifles was stationed at a fort on the Neilgherry Hills, and the officer who had so long persecuted Eva with his addresses was proceeding in the same direction as herself, and at the same time. They travelled by the same route, stopped at the same places, but though they met daily, Eva would never exchange a word with her importunate admirer. He hovered about her palanquin, volunteered assistance when she crossed the deep bed of some mountain nullah, halted when her bearers halted, toiled up the steep ghaut by her side, but he did not succeed in winning a smile from her. On arriving at her destination she wrote to me complaining bitterly of the annoyance to which she had been subjected, and entreating me to come to her, as she did not like remaining at Ootacumand without my protection. Thus urged,

I could not refuse, and set out at once, with the fixed determination of calling the obnoxious personage to strict account."

Sophy made a low and inaudible remark.

"I made so much haste on the journey, that, late on the fifth day after quitting Madras, I arrived at Ootacumand. As it was past midnight, I left my attendants to shift for themselves, and went on alone to the bungalow in which my ward was lodged. It was beautifully situated in the midst of a large compound, or enclosure, overlooking steep mountain precipices clothed with a thick jungle, which at this hour resounded with the prolonged howls, fierce yells, and savage roaring of various wild beasts. A glorious moon was shining —such a moon as can only be seen in that resplendent clime—and on entering the compound I paused to look around and admire the beauty of the scene, rendered doubly beautiful at that

magic hour. I knew the place well. Twice before I had been there to seek health from the bracing air. On either side there were mango-groves, and nearer the bungalow, with its white walls and green verandahs glittering in the brilliant moonbeams, grew some tall palm-trees. The house was surrounded by a garden laid out in the Eastern style. The profound stillness of the night was only broken, as I have said, by the ceaseless howling of the wild beasts in the jungle; but I was too familiar with such sounds to allow them to disturb me. I remained standing under a tree for a few minutes, placidly contemplating the lovely scene. Suddenly my ear caught a slight sound, and I perceived a tall figure issue from the grove and proceed quickly towards the house. In another moment, and before I could recover from the surprise into which I was thrown by the unlooked-for incident, the person in question had gained

the verandah and entered the house by an open window. I could not be mistaken in him. Instinctive dislike would have told me who he was, even if his military attire, tall stature, and peculiar bearing had not betrayed him. What was his object? I did not dare to ask myself, but I felt sure he was an unlicensed intruder. A thrill of fierce indignation shot through my frame. Speeding towards the bungalow, I passed through the open window and entered a room, which bore evidence from a hundred eloquent trifles that Eva had been there before retiring to rest. An inner door was open. In another instant I was in a gallery communicating with the sleeping-chambers. Hitherto I had seen no one, but the sound of my footsteps had alarmed the intruder, and just as I reached the gallery he came from out an ante-room. There we were face to face. The villain's countenance, made ghastly by the white moonlight,

showed how terribly he was disconcerted by the interruption. 'For what infamous purpose have you come here?' I cried, in a voice hoarse with passion. 'Speak at once.' 'I have no explanation to give to you,' he rejoined. 'Put any construction you please on my presence. I did not come here uninvited.' Exasperated beyond all endurance by this vile insinuation, I rushed towards him, meaning to fell him to the ground. But he was not unprepared for the attack. Stepping back, he drew a small pocket-pistol, and threatened to fire if I advanced. But I threw myself upon him, and in the struggle the pistol went off, the ball grazing my arm, and inflicting a slight hurt, which added to my fury. Seizing him by the throat, I should probably have strangled him if the report of the pistol had not alarmed the house, and brought several native servants instantly to the spot. In another minute, Eva,

wrapped in a robe de chambre, appeared on the scene. 'Let me go,' cried the villain, trying vainly to free himself from my grasp. 'I will give you any satisfaction you like to-morrow.' 'You shall not go till you have apologised for this outrage,' I replied. And I forced him down to Eva's feet. What he said, while in this abject posture, I know not. But she entreated me to let him go, and I released him. As he rose to his feet he turned on me with an aspect of fiercest menace, and said, in a deep voice, 'We shall have an account to settle.' 'It shall be settled now,' I replied. 'Drive this fellow forth,' I added, in Hindostanee, to the native servants who were standing around. 'He is a scoundrel, and does not deserve to be treated like a sahib.' Several of them were armed with bamboos, and no sooner was the order given, than a shower of blows drove him from the place."

"How could he survive this degradation?" cried Sophy.

"He bore it meekly enough," rejoined Pomfret, with stern contempt, "for, despite his threats, I heard nothing more of him. Not one of his brother-officers would have supported him. But he felt that his secret was safe, because he knew that consideration for Eva, whose name was not to be mixed up in such an affair, would keep me silent. I thought I had done with him for ever. But I was wrong. Chance gave him an opportunity of vengeance."

"Alas! alas!" cried Sophy, "I, who would have laid down my life for you, have been made the instrument of his revenge. Oh, what a revelation you have made to me, Julian! Oh, what a weak, contemptible creature I appear in my own eyes! Oh, that I could have been the dupe of such a man!"

"Knowing what you now know, Sophy, imagine what my feelings must have been when you

first informed me that you had made the acquaintance of one whom of all men I would have kept from your sight. Till then I was not aware that Captain Musgrave had returned to England, for after that night I had not concerned myself about him. A foreboding of ill struck me, but, though alarmed, I would not attend to it. Eva was unwell. The villain's infamous conduct gave her a great shock, and she had not recovered from it. Otherwise, I should have come to England at once. But I had no serious apprehension, for I had too much confidence in you."

"How wofully was your confidence misplaced, Julian!" she cried.

"Your next letter tore the bandage rudely from my eyes, and showed me the imminence of the danger. My helplessness to avert the dire calamity added to the intensity of my suffering. I would almost have bartered my soul to annihilate the

space between us. All my plans were destroyed in a moment, and by the hand of him I most detested. Eva chanced to be with me at the time, and was all anxiety to learn the cause of my distress, but I could not satisfy her. I told her I had received bad news—that a terrible peril threatened one very dear to me—and that my sole chance of averting it was by immediate return to England. I should start at once. She besought me to allow her to accompany me; but in that case I must have confided the secret of my life to her, and I was obliged to refuse. She taxed me with cruelty. But I was firm. I started by the first mail, and left her behind, half broken-hearted."

"She loves you, Julian," cried Sophy, with a pang keener than any she had previously experienced.

"I need not tell you of my anxieties during

the voyage," he continued. "Alternately I was buoyed up by hope, or plunged into the depths of despair. My excitement was so great that I suffered from a nervous fever, which increased as I travelled from Marseilles to London. All the way I was constantly asking myself one question, 'Shall I be in time to save her?' Arrived at last at Hertford-street, I received the fatal response, and learnt that I was too late."

"Yes, too late!—too late!" cried Sophy, distractedly. "All this crushing misery might have been spared if you had but told me the truth in the letter which you sent me from Marseilles. What am I to do, Julian? In pity counsel me!"

"I dare not—cannot counsel you," he rejoined. "You must act as your own feelings dictate."

"Oh, this is cruel, Julian! I know that I am

nothing to you now. I know that the fault I have committed is irreparable; but you loved me once, and by that love I conjure you to help me."

"My heart bleeds for you, Sophy," he rejoined. "But I repeat, I cannot advise you. Think well before you take any desperate step."

"I understand," she cried, bitterly. "You fear that I am about to throw myself upon you, and you repulse me. The suspicion is unworthy of you, Julian. I have no such thought. I shall never seek to pass the bar that separates us. But in this frightful extremity I have no one to appeal to but you. You see before you a poor, bewildered, terrified creature, who supplicates you on her knees for aid, and yet you will not help her."

"Rise, madam," said Pomfret, with forced coldness, and raising her as he spoke. "It is not fitting you should kneel to me."

"You rebuke me justly, Julian," she said, in a tone of resignation. "Heaven help me! I have no friend left."

"There you are wrong," he rejoined. "You have a true friend in me, and always will have one. But even *I* shrink from the awful responsibility of counselling you at a juncture like the present."

"My resolution is taken," she said. "I have left Captain Musgrave for ever."

"I neither approve the step, nor attempt to dissuade you from it. But whatever course you resolve upon, act with prudence. A terrible fault has been committed. Do not add another to it. You will inflict no punishment upon Captain Musgrave by leaving him. He is too heartless to feel your loss, and may be glad to be freed from the restraint."

"Not even to punish him would I remain with him," she cried. "I shall try to find out some

secure retreat. You have furnished me with the means of flight, and I thank you for doing so."

"The crisis has come sooner than I anticipated," he said. "But on one point you need feel no uneasiness. You shall never want resources. The income you have recently enjoyed shall be continued."

"Impossible!" she exclaimed. "I cannot accept it. Without the money you have so generously sent me, I might be unable to carry out my design, therefore I will avail myself of it. But I can be under no further pecuniary obligation to you."

"As you will. But should occasion arise, you may depend on me. It is my intention to return almost immediately to India; but you know how to address me there, and can easily communicate with me."

"And you mean to go back to India at once?" she cried, unable to conceal her disappointment.

"I thought you would have remained in England."

"What have I to do in England now?" he exclaimed, with mournful bitterness. "I have no longer any interest in the country. All whom I have known there suppose me dead, and I do not design to undeceive them. They have long since forgotten me, and would feel little pleasure at my resurrection. Could the dearest friend we have lost come to life again, we should accord him but a cold welcome. However, I shall not try the experiment. Doubtless the change is in myself, and something may be owing to my frame of mind, but London seems strangely altered — altered for the worse—since I left it. I felt like an utter stranger in its streets. I have business to transact there which may detain me for a week or two, and then I shall set out for India—never, I think, to return."

"May you be happy there, Julian!" she sighed.

"I do not expect much happiness, unless I can purchase oblivion," he rejoined.

"But you have Eva to care for," she remarked, trembling as she spoke.

"She will leave me soon, and then I shall be utterly desolate. But this painful interview must be brought to an end. Have you aught more to say to me?"

"Nothing," she rejoined, sadly. "I will not ask you to think of me, for it were best to forget me. But be sure I shall never cease to think of you."

"You are quite resolved to leave Captain Musgrave?"

"Quite," she rejoined, firmly. "I shall go—I know not whither—but I shall not return to him."

"You ought not to abandon Celia. Take her with you."

"Such is my intention," she replied. "When she is made acquainted with my sad position, I am sure she will attend me in my flight. She owes me some reparation; since, but for her persuasion, I should not have made this fatal marriage."

He heard not what she said. Without a look—without a farewell word—he was gone.

A few minutes elapsed before Sophy found her way back to her sister, who was impatiently awaiting her.

A long and earnest conversation then took place between them. At first, Celia strenuously opposed her sister's design, but eventually she yielded, and consented to accompany her.

A certain plan being agreed upon, they returned to the coupé, and, entering it, bade the coachman drive to the Parc de Monceaux. Arrived there, they alighted and dismissed him.

After remaining for a short time in this ex-

quisite garden, they proceeded to the gates opening upon the Boulevart Malesherbes, where they engaged another coupé, and drove to the Hôtel du Chemin de Fer du Nord.

End of the Second Book.

BOOK III.

EVA BRACEBRIDGE.

I.

THAT NIGHT.

THAT night Captain Musgrave did not re-enter his rooms at the Grand Hôtel till late.

An evening to himself had convinced him that a bachelor's life was far more congenial to his tastes than that of a Benedict. After dining well at Brebon's, and passing two or three hours very much to his satisfaction at the lively little theatre of the Palais Royal, he repaired by way of the Rue Richelieu to the boulevarts, and thinking it too soon to return to his hotel, as the night was ex-

tremely fine, and the boulevarts still crowded, he extended his stroll.

While passing the Café Napolitain, he was hailed by our young acquaintances, Hornby and Rufus, who were seated outside the café, refreshing themselves with ices, so he stopped and took a chair beside them. They had just come from the Concert Musard, which did not offer them half as much attraction as Mabille, and then they began to narrate their adventures during the day, to which Musgrave vouchsafed to listen, while smoking an excellent cigar supplied him by Hornby.

"After all, there is no place for amusement like Paris," remarked the captain; "but a married man is cut out of so many pleasant things, that he might as well be anywhere else. I shan't prolong my stay beyond a day or two, but be off to the shores of the Mediterranean."

"Awfully dull work there, I should think. Won't suit you," said Rufus.

"It will suit my wife," replied Musgrave. "Paris don't agree with her."

"I was glad to see her out this afternoon," observed Hornby. "I had heard from Tiff that she was unwell."

"I've been at Vincennes, and wasn't aware she had been out," rejoined Musgrave, surprised. "But I'm glad to hear it. Where did you see her?"

"In the Bois, with Miss Leycester," replied Hornby. "They were in a dark coupé. They didn't see us, but we saw them plainly enough, and tried to attract their attention, but the coachman was driving rather quickly, and had gone by in a minute."

"Later on we caught sight of them in the Parc de Monceaux," said Rufus. "But, unluckily, we were unable to join them."

The trio occupied their seats for some time longer, but neither of Captain Musgrave's com-

panions guessed from his manner that he was angry at what they had told him.

When they returned together to the Grand Hôtel it was not far from midnight. Having made some arrangements for sight-seeing on the morrow, to conclude with a dinner at Riche's, they separated on the second landing of the great staircase, Hornby and Rufus mounting to a higher story, and Captain Musgrave proceeding to his own apartments.

No presentiment of ill crossed him as he unfastened the door and let himself in. He was rather surprised to find the room buried in darkness, but concluding that his wife and Celia had long since retired to rest, he struck a match and lighted a candle, when his eye fell upon a letter lying on the table.

It was addressed to himself, and in his wife's handwriting. He opened it with some misgiving.

The very first words startled him, as well they might. Thus he read:

"We have parted for ever.

"After what passed between us this morning, when I learnt from your own lips the frightful position in which you have placed me, you could not expect me to remain with you longer. Were I to do so, I should be equally criminal with yourself. I have sinned in ignorance, but now that my eyes are opened, I will sin no more.

"The exultation which you manifested at the success of your vindictive scheme, changed the feelings which I had previously entertained for you into horror and aversion. Henceforth, I can only regard you as the destroyer of my earthly happiness.

"Since it is impossible you can make reparation for what you have done, you can never hope for

my forgiveness. Still, for the sake of another who is yet more deeply injured than myself, I shall keep silence as to your infamous conduct, unless forced in self-defence to speak out.

"Every present, however trifling, that you have made me is left behind. I wish to have nothing to remind me of a period of shame and dishonour. Would I could wholly obliterate it from my memory!

"It will be useless to follow me, or to attempt to discover my retreat. Were you to find me, you would gain nothing. Neither prayers nor threats will induce me to return. I will die rather than hold further intercourse with one who has so wickedly, so cruelly betrayed me.

"If I can, I will hide my sorrows and my shame from the eyes of the world, and will strive by a life of penitence to make my peace with Heaven.

"I know it is idle to appeal to your compassion,

but regard for yourself may prevent you from troubling me further. Though cruelly used and deeply wronged, I nourish no vindictive feelings against you. But desperation may make me dangerous.

"Celia knows all, and accompanies me in my flight."

Captain Musgrave read this letter with mingled emotions of alarm, vexation, and rage. Anger, however, predominated over the other feelings.

Throwing down the letter, he gave vent to a deep imprecation, which he levelled against the heads of his unfortunate wife and Myddleton Pomfret; entertaining not a doubt in his own mind that the latter was the instigator of Sophy's flight.

"This is an infernally vexatious occurrence,' he exclaimed, pacing to and fro within the room, "and upsets all my plans. Were it not for this

cursed Myddleton Pomfret, she might have gone away and welcome, for I have quite lost my liking for her. In the lesson I gave her this morning I rather overdid it. I meant to frighten her, but it appears that I roused the little spirit she possesses. A worm, they say, will turn, and I suppose it will. Women are so difficult to understand. My influence over her has been counteracted by Pomfret, now she has found out who he is. She has left me to return to him—that's the long and the short of it. My only surprise is that he should be idiot enough to take her back. That Celia should have accompanied her surprises me more than all the rest. I didn't think the girl had been such a confounded fool."

It then occurred to him that he ought to ascertain that his wife and her sister were really gone. Accordingly, he went into the inner room. Subsequently to Sophy's hasty departure, the

chamber had been put in order by the servants of the hotel, but several dresses hanging from the rails, various articles of feminine requirement on the toilette-table, trinkets, caskets, boxes, large and small, piled up in a corner—all plainly told that she had taken nothing with her. Captain Musgrave was not easily affected by trifles. But the sight of these objects gave him a sharp pang.

"Why the devil did she leave me?" he cried. "Or, if she must go, why couldn't she take her dresses with her? The sight of them makes me sick."

After enduring another pang, and persuading himself that his sensibilities were over-acute, he repaired to the chamber lately occupied by Celia, and found it in much the same state as the other —dresses lying about, articles on the toilette-table, shoes and brodequins of most diminutive size. She, too, had left all her things behind her.

"It's plain they've gone off in a desperate hurry," thought Musgrave, as he gazed around. "I'm sorry to lose Celia," he added, heaving a sigh; "she was an uncommonly lively girl. I fancied she would have kept her sister right. But women are all alike."

With this sage reflection he returned to the principal room, and in order to calm his nerves and assist in the consideration of the best course to be pursued, he lighted a cheroot. After weighing the matter over, he came to the conclusion that it was not worth while disturbing the house at that time of night. So, prudently resolving to defer any steps he might deem it proper to take till the morrow, he sought his couch, and fell asleep much quicker than most men, similarly circumstanced, would have been able to do.

II.

NEXT MORNING.

"WHAT do you think, my dear?" cried Mrs. Flaxyard, as her husband entered the room. He had gone out before breakfast to take a bath at one of the floating establishments on the Seine. "What do you think? I'm almost afraid to tell you. Our charming friend, Mrs. Musgrave——"

"Well, what of her?" interrupted Flaxyard, impatiently.

"Let me finish, and you shall hear. You'll scarcely believe it, though, when I tell you, for

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"That was before I learnt—before I perceived I mean—that they were not quite so happy as they appeared."

"I'm sure Captain Musgrave is very fascinating," said Tiffany, "and deserves a better wife than he has found. The faults must have been entirely on her side. Don't you think so, ma?"

"I'm not quite prepared to say that, my dear. But it shows how one may be deceived by appearances."

"You don't know what you are talking about, you silly girl," cried Flaxyard to his daughter. "My belief is that Mrs. Musgrave has only left her husband."

"Well, ain't that eloping from him?"

"Not exactly. She may have had good reasons for the step she has taken. Mind, I don't attempt to justify her, but it may be so. What has happened to Miss Leycester?"

she's the very last person one would have expected to commit such a foolish act."

"What the deuce *has* she done?"

"Nothing to make such a fuss about," interposed Tiffany, with a laugh. "Only eloped from her husband—that's all."

"The deuce she has! Well, I'm not surprised at it."

"If you're not surprised, Mr. Flaxyard, I am," said his lady. "I thought them the happiest couple I ever met. Why, they haven't been married a month!"

"It's a thousand pities they were ever married at all," cried old Flaxyard, dryly.

"That's easy to say now, pa," remarked Tiffany, "but I have heard you express a very different opinion. You said Mrs. Musgrave was a most lovely and amiable creature, and the captain a most fortunate man."

"I must apologise for intruding upon you at this hour," said Pomfret, again bowing to the ladies, "but I have something important to say to you."

"We'll leave you with the gentleman, my dear," said Mrs. Flaxyard, rising.

"Ay, do," replied her husband. "Go down to breakfast in the salle-à-manger, and I'll join you as soon as I can."

"Who is it, pa?" whispered Tiffany, who had never removed her eyes from the handsome stranger.

But no notice being taken of the inquiry, she was obliged to leave the room with her curiosity ungratified.

"Well, sir," cried Flaxyard, as soon as they were alone, "I needn't tell you what has happened. She's gone. But pray understand that I won't stir another step in the matter. I am sorry I have had anything to do with it."

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"That's the strangest part of the affair," rejoined Tiffany. "She has gone with her sister."

"What, Miss Leycester eloped too! Now I'm satisfied. That confirms my view of the case."

"If I'm not greatly mistaken, pa, you could give us some explanation of this mysterious affair if you thought proper."

"Perhaps I might, but I don't choose."

Just then there was a tap at the door.

"Entrez!" vociferated the old gentleman.

Conceive his astonishment, when, in answer to the summons, Myddleton Pomfret stepped in.

The two ladies had never seen Mr. Pomfret before, but were both greatly struck by his distinguished appearance, and wondered who he possibly could be. He bowed gravely to them, but did not advance far into the room.

"Bless my soul, sir, is it you?" cried Flaxyard. "You are the very last person I expected to see."

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"You won't object, perhaps, to my assuring you that I am not an accessory to Mrs. Musgrave's flight," rejoined Pomfret. "I shall also take it as a favour if you will signify to Captain Musgrave that I am at the Hôtel Wagram, should he desire to communicate with me."

"Sorry I can't oblige you—must decline. I won't affect to deny that I have some idea who you are. Don't be alarmed—your secret is perfectly safe with me. I sympathise with your unfortunate position, and I sympathise yet more strongly with poor Mrs. Musgrave, but I won't be dragged into the affair. It doesn't concern me in the least. Allow me to say that I came to Paris with my family for recreation, and not to be mixed up in a painful case with which I have no concern. A fortnight ago I knew nothing whatever of Captain and Mrs. Musgrave. And you, sir, are a still more recent acquaintance. I should like to

be of service to you if I could—but I can't. However, I may tender you a little friendly advice, and since it is well meant, I hope you won't take it amiss. You're wrong to come here at this juncture. Keep out of Captain Musgrave's way. No need to provoke a quarrel—you understand."

"Keep out of his way!" cried Pomfret, so fiercely that he made the other start. "It is for him to keep out of my way. I came here for no other purpose than to let him know, through you, where I am to be found. I won't allow him to assert, as he might do, that I shun him. I will take care that he shall know where to find me—if he is so inclined."

With this he turned to depart. Just then, a key was heard in the lock; the door opened, and in came Hornby, followed by Musgrave.

The latter recoiled for a moment, but quickly recovering himself, sprang towards Pomfret, and a

collision must have occurred if Flaxyard had not thrown himself between them.

"Keep the peace, gentlemen! keep the peace!" he cried. "No fighting in this room. Shut the door instantly, Hornby," he added to his son.

"How comes it that I find this person in your room, sir?" said Musgrave to Flaxyard. "I did not know you were acquainted with him."

"I have only recently made Mr. Pomfret's acquaintance," replied the old gentleman, with a puzzled look, "and he has done me the honour to call upon me."

"For what purpose?"

"Really, I cannot answer that question, captain."

"Tell him," interposed Pomfret.

"Well then, since I must speak, I believe Mr. Pomfret's principal object in coming here was to beg me to let you know where he is to be found."

"He need not have taken the trouble. I am aware that he is staying at the Hôtel Wagram, and I am about to send a friend to him."

"Perhaps I may be permitted to observe that I am charged with the message," remarked Hornby. "I shall be happy to wait on Mr. Pomfret at any hour that may suit his convenience."

"Hold your tongue, sir," said Flaxyard to his son. "Gentlemen," he added to the others, "for the poor lady's sake—for your own sakes—this matter must not proceed further. You will both understand why I urge a pacific arrangement. If you desire it, I am ready to act as umpire between you. But I must insist that the discussion be conducted temperately."

"It's all very well to talk about conducting a discussion temperately," said Hornby to his father. "Some allowance ought to be made for the feelings of an injured husband. No wonder Captain

Musgrave should feel exasperated when he sees before him the individual whom he supposes to have been the instigator of his wife's flight."

"I have yet to learn that Captain Musgrave is an injured husband," said Flaxyard. "I hope not. I believe not."

"I don't know what you consider an injured husband, sir," cried Musgrave, fiercely. "I feel certain that Mr. Pomfret is the contriver of my wife's flight, and I am almost equally certain that she has taken refuge with him."

"I shall content myself with saying that I neither counselled Mrs. Musgrave's flight, nor aided it," said Pomfret, sternly.

"Are we to understand, Mr. Pomfret, that you are entirely unacquainted with Mrs. Musgrave's retreat?" inquired Hornby.

"I am entirely ignorant of it," was the reply.

"There, captain, I think you ought to be satis-

fied," remarked Flaxyard. "You have Mr. Pomfret's distinct denial that he knows anything about Mrs. Musgrave's disappearance."

"Pardon me, sir, I am far from satisfied," rejoined Musgrave. "I attach little credit to the denial. Perhaps Mr. Pomfret will explain the nature of the interest that he takes in my ill-advised wife? I understand that he represents himself to be a friend of her first husband."

"Pray favour us with an explanation on this point?" added Hornby.

"Will you be quiet, sir, and not make mischief?" said his father, in a low tone.

"I could give such an explanation as would confound him who ventures to ask for it," said Pomfret, in reply to Hornby. "He may thank me for the restraint I put upon myself."

"You talk of restraint," cried Musgrave, furiously. "What prevents me from tearing the

mask from your face, and showing you as what you are?"

"Self-consideration prevents you," rejoined Pomfret, sternly.

"Pray have done with these bitter taunts and provocations, gentlemen," interposed Flaxyard. "I don't ask you to make friends. I don't ask you to do so. But consider the sad consequences of any indiscretion, and let silence be observed."

"You counsel well, sir," said Pomfret. "And as I cannot command myself, I will withdraw."

"I applaud your determination, sir," said Flaxyard, attending him to the door. "For Heaven's sake not another word!" he added, gently pushing him out.

"You flatter yourself you have put an end to this dispute, Mr. Flaxyard, by getting rid of the fellow?" said Musgrave, as the old gentleman re-entered the room.

"Yes, captain, I rather think I have. Take my advice, and don't make any more fuss about the matter. Reconcile yourself to the loss of your wife as well as you can. I dare say you'll get over it in time."

"Very likely I may. There's philosophy in your counsel, at all events."

"Then my services are no longer required?" remarked Hornby, with a slight look of disappointment.

"Of course not," replied his father. "There are cogent reasons why the matter should not proceed further."

"I don't quite see them," rejoined Hornby. "Were I in Captain Musgrave's place, I shouldn't feel inclined to let Mr. Pomfret walk off so easily."

"Captain Musgrave has come to a very wise determination."

"Then if I should ever marry, and my wife

should happen to run away, you would advise me to take it patiently?"

"Don't trouble me with any nonsensical questions, sir."

"Mr. Flaxyard, you are a wise man," said Musgrave, after a moment's reflection. "If I can help it, I won't furnish any paragraphs for the newspapers; and as to the Divorce Court, that's the very last place in which I should like to figure."

"I felt sure you would come to that conclusion," remarked Flaxyard.

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Flaxyard and Tiffany came in. On seeing Captain Musgrave, they both set up a cry.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Flaxyard. "How sorry we are for you, to be sure!"

"Never was there anything so dreadful!" cried Tiffany. "I haven't half recovered from the shock."

"You needn't be sorry at all. Nothing dreadful has happened," said Flaxyard, winking at Musgrave and Hornby. "An absurd story has got about, which I know you've heard. Nothing can be further from the truth. Yester-afternoon, while Captain Musgrave was at Vincennes—at Vincennes, wasn't it, captain?—Mrs. Musgrave received a telegraphic message, requiring her presence in London this morning. It was a matter of life and death. What was she to do?"

"Consult her husband, of course," replied Mr. Flaxyard.

"But she couldn't consult him. He wasn't in the way. He wasn't expected back till late. To be in time, she must go by the night mail. So she went, and took her sister with her."

"A very independent step. I rather approve of it," remarked Tiffany. "But didn't she leave any message?"

"Of course she did!" cried Flaxyard, again winking at Musgrave. "But the garçon didn't deliver it. Those garçons are so abominably stupid and dilatory."

"She left a letter in the room, but I didn't chance to find it," said Musgrave. "She and Celia went off in such a hurry that they scarcely took anything with them. They gave me a terrible fright, and I passed a dreadful night, as you may suppose."

"No wonder at it," cried Tiffany. "Pa would have gone wild if ma and I had left him in such a manner. Wouldn't you, you dear old darling?"

"Don't try me," said the old gentleman.

"Well, I'm truly rejoiced at this satisfactory explanation," cried Mrs. Flaxyard. "I must own that it did appear to me inconceivable that so superior a woman as Mrs. Musgrave could act in such a way. But when do you expect the dear lady back?"

"I can scarcely say," rejoined Musgrave. "Her return depends on circumstances."

"How we shall laugh at the mistake when we see her!" cried Tiffany. "The idea that she should have eloped! How droll it seems! I shall never get over it."

"Well, captain, since you're left quite by yourself, I hope you'll pass the day with us," said Mrs. Flaxyard.

Musgrave bowed, and said he should be delighted. And so it was settled, in spite of the significant looks of old Flaxyard and Hornby.

III.

SIR NORMAN HYLTON.

Of the many admirably-conducted hotels that now accommodate the herds of tourists who flock to Switzerland, commend us to the Beau-Rivage at Ouchy.

With its great central hall, cool on the hottest day in summer; its broad stone staircases; its airy chambers, the windows of which look upon the broad expanse of Lake Leman and the stupendous range of Alps on the opposite shore; its internal

be of service to you if I could—but I can't. However, I may tender you a little friendly advice, and since it is well meant, I hope you won't take it amiss. You're wrong to come here at this juncture. Keep out of Captain Musgrave's way. No need to provoke a quarrel—you understand."

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comforts of all kinds, amongst which the capital cuisine and capital cellar ought to be enumerated; its gardens sloping down to the lake; its shady walks which lead you to baths, where you may plunge into Leman's dark blue waters; its ever-lively little port; with all these, and many more attractions in the way of balls, concerts, sailing-matches, and the command of all sorts of excursions either by steamer or rail, to Geneva or Coppet, to Vevay or Chillon, no more delightful séjour can be found than is offered by this splendid establishment.

Generally, the Beau-Rivage is full to overflowing. Russian princes, German nobles, wealthy Spaniards and Americans, to say nothing of our own compatriots, take possession of the best apartments, and remain there. Thus you may esteem yourself fortunate if you can secure an upper room, the casements of which command the glorious

view of lake and mountain to which we have just adverted.

At the time when we are about to visit the Beau-Rivage, the Swiss season was at its height, and never had such an army of tourists invaded that picturesque country. They came from all parts, but the English far outnumbered the others, for the great Mr. Cook had marshalled his legions and led them on from Chamouni to Lucerne, from the foot of Mont Blanc to the kulm of the Rigi. The managers and proprietors of the vast hotels at Zurich and Lucerne, at Basle and Geneva, were driven half frantic by the countless hosts that besieged their doors. That year, Germany being out of favour with Englishmen, Switzerland reaped the benefit of the stream thus diverted from its channel. Had the Beau-Rivage possessed thrice its number of rooms it would still have been unequal to the demands upon its space. But though

there were necessarily frequent departures, the hotel was always full—too full, in fact. Crowded were all the breakfast-tables, crowded was the early table d'hôte dinner, crowded the later repast.

Gay groups thronged the wide verandah in front of the hotel on those fine summer evenings, or wandered about the grassy slopes till it was time to take coffee, or collect together to hear an impromptu concert got up by some musical amateurs in the reading-room. Plenty of professional music there was besides. Almost every evening an excellent band enlivened the visitors, and twice a week a ball took place in the great hall.

'Bathing betimes in the blue lake to repair the fatigues of the evening, and procure an appetite for the ferraz and trout and white honey that awaited them at breakfast; boating on the lake during the day, fishing, sketching by such as were of an artistic turn, excursions in the steamers to either

extremity of the lake, or across it to Evian, to visit the jewellers' shops on the Grand-Quai or the Rue de la Corraterie at Geneva, or the secluded beauties and grand scenery of Vevay and Villeneuve. Returning in time for an excellent table d'hôte dinner, strolling afterwards on the gazon, or under the trees, with no end of flirting, singing, and dancing—such was the pleasant life led by the company at the Beau-Rivage.

Of course, the society was a good deal mixed. Amongst the three hundred persons brought together in this way, there must naturally be specimens of various classes, but the majority, if not exactly of the higher ranks, consisted of such persons as one is in the habit of meeting during a Swiss tour — lately married couples, who were spending the honeymoon on the Continent; English parsons with their spouses; English country gentlemen with their wives and blooming daugh-

ters; rich merchants with ditto, the daughters not quite so blooming; M.P.s just set at liberty; young men of all kinds and all professions, young barristers, young officers, young mercantile men, civil engineers, clerks in government offices, and others.

The ladies, however, outnumbered the men in the proportion of three to one. Paterfamilias on his travels seems always accompanied by more daughters than sons.

Prince and Princess Woronzoff were staying at the hotel, and these illustrious personages conducted themselves with remarkable affability, dining habitually at the table d'hôte, and without the slightest form and ceremony, mixing on equal terms with the other guests, and not unfrequently taking part in the little musical soirées. The princess was an accomplished musician, and sang divinely. The prince spoke all languages, and con-

versed with equal ease with German, Frenchman, or Englishman.

Besides these, there were some German nobles, who were not distinguished by equal affability. Of course there were many Americans among the company, the most noticeable of whom was the great Mr. Sankey, of New York. Mr. Sankey, who was reputed to be enormously rich, was a widower, and possessed a daughter of extraordinary beauty. To all the bachelors staying at the Beau-Rivage, Melissa Sankey was an object of great attraction, and wherever she appeared she drew after her a crowd of admirers. She was attended by Mrs. Sharpe, an elderly lady, who watched her with the vigilance of a duenna. If Melissa could be said to have shown a preference for any one, it was for Sir Norman Hylton, a young English baronet, who had been staying at the Beau-Rivage for about a fortnight, having been detained there,

it was thought, by the charms of the lovely American damsel.

Sir Norman was about four or five-and-twenty, and had succeeded to the baronetcy about a year ago, on the death of his uncle, Sir Langley Hylton. His property, situated in one of the most beautiful parts of Surrey, had been very much encumbered, so that he was only in possession of a very moderate income; but though by no means rich, and quite unable to maintain his title in the way he desired, Sir Norman was a perfect gentleman, pardonably proud of his ancient lineage, high-spirited, liberal-minded, and generous as far as his means would allow. Perhaps he might have some idea of repairing his fortunes by marriage. We won't pretend to say. Certes, he had a very graceful person as well as a title to offer to any heiress in exchange for her wealth.

Sir Norman Hylton was tall—very tall, indeed,

for he stood above six feet—exceedingly well proportioned, and sufficiently good-looking. He had a lofty forehead, keen grey eyes, and well-cut features. A dark brown beard heightened the manliness of his expression. Sir Norman was a keen sportsman, and fond of all athletic exercises, a bold horseman, and a first-rate shot; he had stalked deer in the Highlands, and killed salmon in Ireland, Scotland, and Norway. For a few years he had been in a crack cavalry regiment, but had sold out on the death of his uncle. Out of the wreck of his family possessions Sir Norman had contrived to preserve a decayed old mansion, situated on a woody eminence overlooking some of the loveliest scenery in Surrey, and surrounded by a park full of magnificent timber, which its owner refused to cut down. Sir Norman was not a member of the Alpine Club, but he had come to Switzerland with the intention of doing something

in the way of an ascent before repairing to the moors of Scotland to shoot grouse; but he got detained, as we have shown, at the Beau-Rivage, and gave up scaling mountains for the present.

Sir Norman being the best-looking Englishman that Melissa had seen, she was determined to captivate him, and she succeeded. The mode of life at the Beau-Rivage was favourable to flirtation. Sir Norman was as much with Melissa as Mr. Sankey and Mrs. Sharpe would permit. He made excursions with her in the morning, sat next her or opposite to her at the table d'hôte, flirted with her in the garden, or listened enraptured to her melodious strains.

But after all this display in public, he found he had made little real progress in her regard. When he asked her if she would like to be lady of Hylton Castle, she only laughed at him, and said she never intended to leave New York.

"What is your old castle like?" she asked, with an air of languid interest. She had not been in England, and fancied that all old castles must resemble those described in romance.

Sir Norman told her that the old mansion stood upon a woody eminence, at the base of which flowed a river. The park was not extensive, but it was picturesque and beautiful, and boasted some of the finest chesnuts in England—trees four centuries old. Moreover, there was a long double avenue of limes planted in the time of Henry VIII. He could not say much for the house. It was partly in ruins. But it had the recommendation of being haunted.

"Of course you intend to rebuild your old mansion?" said Miss Sankey.

"Probably, when I marry," he replied. "But I don't mean to fell my trees to repair my house."

"Then you expect your wife to find the means to do it, I suppose?"

"I don't think she could lay out her money better. I wish you could see the old place, Miss Sankey — such great, crazy, unfurnished rooms, and such a terrace overlooking the river. You'd be delighted with it."

"I should be frightened to death. I wouldn t sleep in a haunted house for the world. Your description of Hylton Castle doesn't tempt me in the least. I prefer a house in Fifth Avenue."

"Ah! but you should see my old chesnuts! and my grand avenue of limes!"

"I don't care for old trees," she replied, shaking her charming head. "And I don't mean to build up an old house."

Sir Norman perceived that he had made no impression, and concealed his disappointment with a

"You won't object, perhaps, to my assuring you that I am not an accessory to Mrs. Musgrave's flight," rejoined Pomfret. "I shall also take it as a favour if you will signify to Captain Musgrave that I am at the Hôtel Wagram, should he desire to communicate with me."

"Sorry I can't oblige you—must decline. I won't affect to deny that I have some idea who you are. Don't be alarmed—your secret is perfectly safe with me. I sympathise with your unfortunate position, and I sympathise yet more strongly with poor Mrs. Musgrave, but I won't be dragged into the affair. It doesn't concern me in the least. Allow me to say that I came to Paris with my family for recreation, and not to be mixed up in a painful case with which I have no concern. A fortnight ago I knew nothing whatever of Captain and Mrs. Musgrave. And you, sir, are a still more recent acquaintance. I should like to

IV.

AN ARRIVAL.

VEXED with himself for the time he had lost in this unprofitable chase, Sir Norman made up his mind to start for Interlachen, when, as he was standing in the great hall, looking on the bustling scene caused by the departure of certain guests and the arrival of others, he noticed a large number of trunks and boxes being brought in, which he felt certain, from their shape and size, had come from India, and he was wondering whom they could belong to, when his speculations were set at

rest by the appearance of the owners of the luggage.

These were a tall, distinguished-looking man, and a young lady of remarkable personal attractions. She was a brunette, with a rich southern complexion, eyes of Oriental splendour, fringed with long silken lashes, splendid jetty tresses, ruddy lips, and pearly teeth—a perfect contrast, in all respects, to the late object of Sir Norman's idolatry, who was a blonde, with pale yellow hair and blue eyes. The new comer's figure was rather petite, but faultless in its symmetry, and Sir Norman, who scanned it critically as her companion was talking to the host, thought he had never beheld such tiny feet. He was puzzled to make out her relationship to the gentleman with her. She could scarcely be his daughter, for though his beard was grey, he could not be much above thirty. She might be his wife, but Sir Norman doubted it.

While traversing the hall the new comers passed near Sir Norman, who now felt almost certain that he had seen the gentleman before, though he could not recollect under what circumstances. He therefore bowed, and said:

"Your features are quite familiar to me, sir, though I cannot give you a name. If the dead could come to life, I should say you were my uncle's old friend, Julian Curzon. You are certainly wonderfully like him."

"I am not aware that I had the pleasure of your uncle's acquaintance, sir," replied the stranger. "I am Mr. Myddleton Pomfret, of Madras."

"Never heard the name before. Pray excuse my presuming to address you. Your astonishing likeness to a departed friend must plead my excuse. But since I have gone so far, allow me to introduce myself as Sir Norman Hylton."

Pomfret bowed courteously, and in return presented Sir Norman to the young lady, describing her as his ward, Miss Eva Bracebridge, who had just returned from Madras.

"Miss Bracebridge only arrived at Marseilles a few days ago," said Pomfret, "and I brought her on to Switzerland to recruit after the voyage."

"You could not have come to a more charming place than this," remarked Sir Norman, delighted to have achieved an introduction to the young lady. "But perhaps you are familiar with all the beauties of Lake Leman?"

"No, I am half ashamed to confess that I have never visited Switzerland before," she replied, smiling. "I asked Mr. Pomfret to bring me here, and though I believe he has business which ought to take him to London, he kindly consented."

"I never refuse your requests, my dear," observed Pomfret.

"Don't say that," she cried. "Sir Norman shall hear what you did, and then he will be able to judge whether you are as amiable as you pretend to be. Would you believe it?" she added to the young baronet. "My guardian, who is bound to take care of me, left me behind at Madras, though I begged and prayed of him to take me to England. Even now I can't understand why I was thus abandoned — but so it was—and you may imagine how forlorn and disconsolate I felt when deprived of my best friend. He had talked of coming back, but I wouldn't wait for him, so I started by the first mail, and here I am, as you perceive."

"I am quite sure your unexpected arrival must have been a great gratification to Mr. Pomfret," remarked Sir Norman.

"I am not quite sure of that," rejoined Eva. "He happened to be at Marseilles when the *Delta*

arrived, and you may conceive his astonishment when he discovered his deserted ward among the passengers."

"Nothing astonishes me that you do, my dear," said Pomfret, smiling kindly at her. "You are giving Sir Norman a very erroneous notion of the affair, and he ought to know that I half suspected you would arrive by the *Delta*, and I therefore went to Marseilles under the conviction that I should meet you—and so I did."

"Well, I believe that's the correct version of the story," she said. "You can have no idea, Sir Norman, of the awful responsibility my guardian has incurred, and how happy he would be to be relieved of it. You see, he doesn't contradict me. He'll give me a shocking bad character, if you ask him."

"Not worse than you deserve," said Pomfret, smiling. "But come! The landlord is waiting to conduct us to our rooms."

"I hope you have got good rooms," remarked Sir Norman.

"The best in the house," interposed the landlord, who spoke English perfectly. "The apartments are on the ground floor. You know them, Sir Norman. They have just been vacated by an Austrian general."

"Oh, then you are well off," cried the young baronet.

Splendid rooms they proved, exquisitely furnished, lofty, spacious, with windows opening upon the verandah, and commanding a view of the lake and the Alps. Eva was enchanted, and ran first to the windows to look out at the view. Then surveying the charming salon, she exclaimed,

"I cannot fail to be happy here."

Though Mr. Pomfret, as may be supposed from what we know of his history, would have preferred a secluded life, he thought it necessary, on Eva's account, to mix with society, and he therefore in-

formed the host that they would dine that day at the table d'hôte.

As usual, the dinner was very numerously attended, two long tables being required by the guests. But very good places had been reserved for the new comers. Eva's appearance created a decided sensation. It had already been rumoured that a remarkably pretty girl had arrived at the hotel, and as she came in, leaning on the arm of her guardian, all eyes were directed towards her, and it was universally admitted that her beauty had not been overrated.

"Who is she?" was the general inquiry. The answer was, that she was Miss Bracebridge, and that the gentleman with her was Mr. Myddleton Pomfret, but beyond these points little information could be obtained. However, her beauty was so transcendent, that it excited universal admiration, and she at once eclipsed Melissa Sankey, who had hitherto reigned supreme.

Prince Woronzoff, who, like all the rest of the company, was struck with Eva's beauty, and who formed her vis-à-vis, paid her particular attention. Sir Norman, who had contrived to secure a place near her, held a very animated conversation with her, and announced his intention of prolonging his stay at the Beau-Rivage.

Totally unconscious of the sensation she had caused, and of the triumph she had achieved, Eva could not fail to be gratified by the attentions shown her, and she thought Prince Woronzoff and the princess charming, and Sir Norman extremely agreeable. The only person who did not, or would not, admire her, was Melissa. Eva, on the contrary, inquired the name of the fair American damsel from Sir Norman, and declared she was the loveliest creature she had ever beheld.

The effect produced by Eva on her first appearance was not lessened as the guests at the Beau-

Rivage saw more of her, and became more familiar with her beauty. She joined in all the amusements that were going on, not perhaps because she cared for them—though she was of a very lively turn, and not indisposed to gaiety — but because Mr. Pomfret wished her to take part in them. It was soon found out that her tastes were musical, that she played on the piano quite as well as Princess Woronzoff, and her talents were called into requisition. She valsed admirably, but she would have no other partner but Mr. Pomfret. She strolled about the gardens in the evenings, but Mr. Pomfret was always with her, and she never quitted his side. Still, his manner towards her was such that it did not even excite Sir Norman's jealousy. Before a week had elapsed, the young baronet had become tremendously spoony.

V.

MORE ARRIVALS.

MEANTIME, there had been other arrivals at the Beau-Rivage. Amongst these were our acquaintances the Flaxyards, who had been making excursions among the mountains and valleys of the Bernese Oberland. Rufus Trotter, having sprained his ankle, had been left behind at Thun. Tiffany took a prodigious fancy to Eva, and an intimacy soon sprang up between the two girls, in spite of

their dissimilarity of character. Tiffany spent half her time with her new acquaintance.

One morning, when they were alone together in the charming room we have described as opening upon the verandah, and looking upon the lake, Tiffany thus broke out:

"I'm sure you must be the happiest person in the world, dearest Eva. I was only observing yesterday to Hornby—who, by-the-by, has lost his heart to you, though you don't care a pin for him—that if there is anybody I should like to change places with, Eva Bracebridge is the person. Those are the very words I used. I won't praise you to your face, sweet girl. I won't repeat all the pretty things I hear said of you by everybody, from Prince Woronzoff downwards. I won't tell you how much you are admired. But I *will* tell you why I think you the happiest person in the world."

"Well, do tell me," replied Eva, smiling. "But before you begin, I may remark that you are quite mistaken. I am not so very, very happy as you seem to imagine."

"Then you ought to be, dearest. You know I'm a very freespoken girl, and don't mind what I say. It isn't because you are young, and rich, and beautiful enough to turn men crazy, that I set you down as the happiest person I know, but because you have got such a very handsome fiancé. Nay, don't blush, dearest, or look cross. I'm not going to take him from you. I only meant to convey to you my opinion that in choosing Sir Norman Hylton you have chosen well."

"You surprise me more than I can express," cried Eva. "How can you have got such an absurd notion into your head? I haven't the least idea of choosing Sir Norman. I never gave him a serious thought."

"Oh, indeed," exclaimed Tiffany, with a look that seemed to imply, "You expect me to believe this, don't you?"

"I see you are incredulous," said Eva. "But I cannot allow you to continue in so strange a misapprehension. I like Sir Norman very much. He is very gentlemanlike and agreeable. But as to marrying him, that is another question entirely."

"Are you serious, dear?"

"Perfectly so."

"Then I must tell you that everybody thinks you are engaged to him."

"Everybody is wrong; and I beg you will contradict them—on the best possible authority."

"Well, I can't say I'm glad to hear it. But perhaps an engagement may come about yet."

"Don't think so for a moment," rejoined Eva, gravely. "What you have said convinces me that

I have allowed Sir Norman to pay me too much attention."

"Oh, a little innocent flirtation is of no consequence. I shall never forgive myself if anything I have said should occasion a coolness between you and Sir Norman."

"I certainly would break off his acquaintance if I didn't fear that I should displease Mr. Pomfret. He is extremely partial to Sir Norman, and might be hurt if I treated him coldly."

"Well, let us change the subject. How fortunate you are in your guardian! Generally speaking, one's notion of a guardian is of a stout old party, awfully ugly and ill-tempered. Now, your guardian is exceedingly handsome. I shouldn't object to be a ward under such agreeable conditions."

"Mr. Pomfret was poor dear papa's partner," said Eva; "and when papa died he appointed him

my guardian. You may praise him as much as you please, and you can't praise him too highly. You don't know half his good qualities. I'm sure I cannot be sufficiently grateful for his unwearying kindness to me. I was never vexed with him, except when he left me behind at Madras. But I quickly followed him."

"Quite right. He had no business to leave you. As your guardian, he is bound to watch over you till you are fairly settled. I dare say he wants to get you married."

"Perhaps he may, but I don't intend to oblige him."

"Is he a widower? He has the air of one."

"Oh no, he has never been married. But I fancy from the melancholy to which he is subject, and which he finds it impossible to shake off, that he must have met with some great disappointment. Knowing him as well as I do, I can hardly imagine

that any woman could jilt him, but I suppose something of the sort must have happened."

"Well, he's very foolish to take such a matter to heart. Pride would make me despise a man who jilted me."

"Mr. Pomfret has very acute sensibilities. I know that he suffers, but I don't know the cause of his suffering. And I am also quite sure that he does not deserve to suffer."

"Well, it's a great pity, seeing he is so amiable and handsome, and all that sort of thing, that he can't find somebody to take compassion upon him, and cure him of his griefs."

"Where there has been a profound attachment, such as Mr. Pomfret *may* have experienced, there can be no second love. A wounded heart cannot be healed."

"Excuse me if I doubt the truth of that adage, dear. Mr. Pomfret, I am persuaded, is capable of

loving again. He looks like a man to inspire a great passion."

"He ought to have some one to love him. But I fear he has suffered too cruelly ever to trust our sex again. Mind, I never heard a word escape him of reproach or complaint. He is not embittered. But his heart is steeled."

"Still, I don't think his case incurable," rejoined Tiffany, with an arch look. "Somebody, I am persuaded, will find out the true remedy. And now just let me mention a circumstance, which I think you ought to know, though pa bade me not to allude to it. When we were in Paris, a few weeks ago, we made acquaintance with a newly married couple, Captain and Mrs. Musgrave, who were staying at the same hotel with us. Without the slightest reason given, they separated — or rather Mrs. Musgrave left her husband. Some explanation of the occurrence was attempted by

Captain Musgrave, but I am certain that his wife left him. However, he didn't seem to mind it at all. One would almost have thought he was glad to get rid of her."

"Poor thing! How could she have married such a man?" cried Eva, who had listened with painful astonishment to this story.

"I don't think he ill-treated her," pursued Tiffany. "He seemed very fond of her; but something extraordinary must have happened to cause such a sudden separation."

"I dare say the poor lady made some discovery. If you are not aware of it, I must tell you that Captain Musgrave has a very bad reputation in India. He has caused unhappiness in more than one family."

"Oh dear! what a dreadful man! No doubt, as you say, something shocking came to his poor wife's ears, and caused her to take this foolish step.

But what I was going to tell you, dear, is, that somehow your guardian was mixed up in the matter, though in what way I can't tell. I fancy he wrote a letter to Mrs. Musgrave—at all events, Hornby told me that Captain Musgrave attributed his wife's flight to Mr. Pomfret's interference."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Eva. "Mr. Pomfret has not mentioned the matter to me."

"Then don't say anything about it to him, dear. I know I ought not to have told you."

"But since you have told me so much, pray tell me how the matter ended?"

"Why, it began and ended with the separation. There was a terrible row between Captain Musgrave and Mr. Pomfret, at which pa and Hornby assisted; but nothing came of it. I can't give you any more particulars, or I would. But both pa and Hornby thought that Mr. Pomfret came

off with flying colours. Don't you think he must have had a powerful motive thus to espouse Mrs. Musgrave's cause?"

"Who was she?"

"A Mrs. Curzon—a young widow. Her sister, Miss Leycester, was with her at the time of the occurrence."

"I never heard of her, but I sincerely commiserate her; and I am quite sure Mr. Pomfret had good grounds for his interference."

"Oh, there can be no doubt about it. It is to be hoped that Captain Musgrave won't find his way here. When we left him in Paris, about ten days ago, he talked of coming on into Switzerland, but I dare say he has changed his plans."

"I hope so," said Eva, with a look of alarm.

An interruption was here offered to the conversation by the entrance of Pomfret and Sir Norman, who came to ask the girls to take a stroll in

M. Haldiman's grounds, and they readily complied with the invitation.

Just as the little party issued forth into the garden, the loud quick ringing of a bell proclaimed the approach of a steamer, and they walked down to the little port to witness the arrivals. Before they could reach the landing-place, the *Leman* was half emptied of its occupants.

There were tourists of all ages, all classes, and all countries; ladies in dust-coloured dresses and hats with green veils, and men in all sorts of travelling costumes, most of them provided with alpenstocks and umbrellas, gibecières, or haversacks, and shod with stout mountain boots. Besides these, there was another class of travellers, attended by couriers and ladies'-maids, and who brought ashore with them piles of boxes and trunks. Most of them hurried off to secure seats in the omnibuses to Lausanne, though a few shaped their course to the Beau-Rivage.

Almost all the passengers had gone by, the engines had begun to work again, and the *Leman* was preparing to cast off, when a traveller, who had been giving some directions about his baggage to a porter, came forward and approached the group.

It was Captain Musgrave.

He had seen the party, and would have avoided them if he could, but since that was impossible, he marched haughtily on. Up to this moment Musgrave had not been aware of Eva's return from Madras, but he instantly recognised her, and her presence added to his confusion. On noticing him, Eva instantly turned aside and addressed Tiffany, who pretended not to observe him, though she glanced at him furtively. A dark cloud gathered over Pomfret's brow as the detested personage approached.

Musgrave raised his hat slightly while passing the group, but took no other notice of them.

Curious to ascertain what he would do, Pomfret kept his eye upon him, and remarked that he mounted the garden-path leading to the hotel, and that the porter followed him with his luggage.

VI.

A DECLARATION.

ENTERING M. Haldiman's delightful grounds adjoining the hotel, our friends took their way along a shady path, which ever and anon afforded them glimpses of the broad expanse of the lake and the mighty range of Alps beyond it. The shade of the trees was delightful after the glare of the sunshine. Sir Norman paused for a moment to point out a lovely view to Eva, and while she was contemplating it the others passed on.

Here was an opportunity which the young baronet would not let slip. It is said that it requires more courage in a man to propose—unless perfectly certain of being accepted—than to mount a breach, and Sir Norman felt a most unwonted trepidation assail him, but he was determined to ascertain his fate.

"Forgive me, Miss Bracebridge," he said, abruptly, and in faltering accents, very different from his usual mode of address — "forgive me if I venture to put a question to you. You cannot fail, I am sure, to have observed the effect produced upon me by your charms. When I first beheld you I was struck by them, and the admiration then kindled has become passionate love."

She made no reply, but moved on.

"For pity's sake stay a moment, and hear me out," he cried, now growing really impassioned.

"I love you to distraction, Eva—I must venture to address you by that adorable name—you alone can make me happy, and if I should be fortunate enough to win you, the business of my life shall be to prove my sense of the prize I have obtained. I have not the vanity to suppose that I have produced any such impression on you as your charms have produced on me, but I hope you are not entirely indifferent to me."

"I cannot allow you to delude yourself, Sir Norman," she said, with a seriousness that almost froze his blood. "Your love is thrown away upon me. Highly as I esteem you, you can never be more to me than a friend."

Again he stopped her.

"Stay!—one word more, I implore you, and I have done," he cried. "Pardon me if I venture to ask the question, but are you—are you engaged to another?"

"This is not a fair question, but I will answer it. I am not."

"Then you do not condemn me to utter despair. If there is no obstacle in the way, let me try to win your love. Your guardian approves of my suit."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Eva. "Have you spoken to him on the subject?"

"I have. And he has afforded me this opportunity of making a declaration. Since you refuse to listen to me, I must get him to plead my cause with you."

At this moment Mr. Pomfret and Tiffany were seen returning along the walk in a very leisurely manner.

Eva flew towards them, followed more slowly by Sir Norman, whose countenance, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal it, betrayed profound mortification.

An indefinable smile passed over Tiffany's face, showing that she suspected what had been taking place, and a significant glance was exchanged between Pomfret and the young baronet.

"What have you been about?" cried Tiffany, archly. "We thought we had lost you."

"An enchanting view of the lake detained us for a moment," remarked Sir Norman.

"Oh, do point it out to me!" said the young lady.

"With the greatest pleasure," he replied.

So they walked on together, leaving Eva and her guardian alone.

"I fear from appearances that Sir Norman has been unsuccessful," he said. Finding she did not contradict him, he went on. "I fancied you liked him. I know all about him, and consider him very eligible. He is of a very old family, and though not rich, has quite enough. He is far above

the average of young men, and well calculated, I firmly believe, to make you happy."

"He told me you would advocate his cause," she rejoined, in a tone of pique. "To please you, sir—mind, merely to please you—I have tolerated his attentions, but I always intended to refuse him; and if you had thought proper to consult me, I should have told you so."

"I did not desire to influence your decision, and therefore left him to take his own course. But I am really concerned to find you have refused him."

"I suppose I am able to judge what sort of person is likely to suit me," she rejoined. "I agree with you that Sir Norman is very gentlemanlike and agreeable — amiable, indeed — but I don't care enough for him to marry him."

"You are a strange, wilful creature, and I begin

to think will give me a vast deal of trouble," said Pomfret, with a half smile. "A most unexceptionable person accidentally turns up, and without a moment's consideration is rejected. I despair of meeting with another with half Sir Norman's recommendations. I may possibly find a wealthier man, but as you yourself have money enough, that is immaterial."

"Why are you in such a hurry to get me married?" she cried, reproachfully. "Are you tired of me?"

"It was your father's dying wish, when he committed you to my charge, that I should see you married to some worthy man, and I am anxious to fulfil the injunction."

"You needn't give yourself any more trouble about me. I don't intend to marry at all."

"Nonsense!" he cried. "You are far too young to come to any such determination. All that can

be said is that you have not yet met with the man whom you could marry."

"I am not so certain about that," she rejoined. "But I have no desire to change my present state, and I may well be deterred from doing so when I hear of so many unhappy marriages. Apropos of unhappy unions, I have just heard of one that has excited my sympathies. I allude to the case of the unfortunate lady who was rash enough to wed that dreadful Captain Musgrave. Pray what led to the separation? I know you can inform me."

"I would have kept this painful matter from you if I could," he rejoined, becoming deathly pale, "but since you have learnt that I was forced to take some part in it, I am bound to give you an explanation. It was to prevent this ill-starred union from taking place that I hurried from Madras; but before I reached London the mischief

was beyond repair. Foreseeing what would inevitably happen, and still desirous of aiding the unfortunate lady, I followed her to Paris, and communicated with her through the medium of Mr. Flaxyard. Subsequently, I had an interview with her, when she announced to me that she had determined to leave her husband for ever. I did not attempt to dissuade her from the step, but left her to act as she deemed proper. On ascertaining that she had carried out her purpose, I placed myself in Captain Musgrave's way; but little came of the meeting, and the affair was hushed up. I cannot tell you what has become of the unfortunate lady. I have made no inquiries about her. In regard to her previous history, and my own connexion with her, I must remain silent. Never again, I beg of you, let the subject be referred to."

He spoke with such unwonted sternness, that

Eva felt quite frightened, regretting that she had sought the explanation.

"Forgive my indiscretion," she said. "I will never seek to penetrate your secrets. But I may breathe a prayer for the unfortunate lady."

VII.

EVENING.

ALL sorts of stories were circulated about Captain Musgrave, but though few of them were to his advantage, he managed to get on very well with the general company at the Beau-Rivage. His remarkable coolness and assurance—some people went so far as to call it impudence—stood him in good stead. He made himself conspicuous at the table d'hôte dinners, rattled away in conversation, flirted with everybody who would flirt with

him, assisted at the musical soirées, and valsed admirably at the balls. He was the horror of the elderly parties, but the admiration of the young folks, with some of whom, we regret to say, his bad reputation lent him a certain charm. Mr. Flaxyard tried to fight shy of him, but this was not an easy matter, and the old gentleman was obliged to give way, since his wife and family were against him. Musgrave, indeed, had contrived to ingratiate himself with Mrs. Flaxyard, and she refused to see any harm in him. Tiffany liked to flirt with him, and Hornby felt quite proud of being intimate with such a tremendous swell.

Ever since Musgrave's arrival, Mr. Pomfret and his beautiful ward had ceased to dine at the table d'hôte, or to take any part in the public amusements of the house, confining themselves entirely to their own rooms, where they received such

society as was agreeable to them. Eva's seclusion, whatever might be its cause, was a source of great regret to the general company. They missed her charming face at the table d'hôte, they missed her graceful figure in the garden, but, above all, they missed her at the concerts and balls. None knew the exact cause of this sudden disappearance of their brightest luminary, but everybody connected it with Captain Musgrave.

To Eva this change was no great deprivation, for she had grown rather tired of the incessant gaiety and racket of the place. She had a piano in her own room, with plenty of music and plenty of books, and quite as much society as she cared for. Indeed, if we are not greatly mistaken, she would have been quite content with no other society than that of her guardian. Poor Sir Norman had not been altogether banished from her presence. Notwithstanding his rejection, he still

persevered in his suit, probably because he received secret encouragement from Pomfret.

It was a lovely evening. After a burning hot day, the sun had set gloriously behind the mighty Alps, dyeing their snowy peaks with crimson, and rosy patches still lingered on the summits of some of the loftiest of the range, though their sides looked spectrally white. A gentle breeze was stirring just sufficient to fill the lateen sails of the barks which were winging their way like butterflies to the little port. A steamer was seen in the distance, and the sound of its paddle-wheels could be heard in the stillness. Nearer to Ouchy, and yet perhaps a league from shore, a crowd of gay-looking little barks might be seen decking the waters. At the rear of the hotel might be seen the cathedral and castle of Lausanne, crowning the vine-clad slopes. Numerous modern châteaux, with here and there a feudal tower, embellished

the woody landscape. The background formed by the magnificent range of the Jura offered a picture wholly different, but little less beautiful, than that presented by the Savoyard shore. Mirthful talk and light laughter arose from the various groups scattered about the garden, or collected in the bosquets, or under the trees, and these were the only sounds, except distant shouts on the lake, that broke the stillness.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.